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*DRAMAS AND TRAGEDIES OF  
CHIVALRIC FRANCE*

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PRIVATE MEMOIRS  
OF  
A. F. BERTRAND DE MOLEVILLE

VOLUME ONE

MARIE ANTOINETTE EDITION

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Dupleix

*Louis XVI*

ROMANCES OF ROYALTY

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PRIVATE MEMOIRS

OF

A. F. BERTRAND DE MOLEVILLE

MINISTER OF STATE, 1790-1791

RELATIVE TO

THE LAST YEAR OF THE REIGN OF  
LOUIS THE SIXTEENTH

TRANSLATED FROM THE ORIGINAL MANUSCRIPT OF THE AUTHOR

WITH AN INTRODUCTION AND NOTES

BY THE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF



EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

G. K. FORTESCUE, LL.D.

*Keeper of Printed Books at the British Museum*

IN TWO VOLUMES

VOL. I.

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## EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION.

BY G. K. FORTESCUE.

ANTOINE FRANÇOIS BERTRAND DE MOLEVILLE, the author of these Memoirs, was born at Toulouse in the year 1744. He came of an old family of the "Noblesse of the Robe," which had produced at least one great man, Jean Bertrand or Bertrandi, who was born in 1470, became First President in the Parlement of Paris in 1550, Chancellor of France, 2d January 1551. On the death of his wife, Bertrand took orders, became Archbishop of Sery in 1557, and Cardinal, and died at Venice, on his way from Rome, where he had assisted at the election of Pope Pius IV., in January, 1560. Bertrand de Moleville was evidently proud of his collateral ancestor.

His first literary effort was a reply to Condorcet's "*Éloge du Chancelier de l'Hopital*" by a "*Lettre à l'auteur de l'Éloge du Chancelier de l'Hopital, contenant des recherches sur l'histoire d'Henri II.*," published in 1778. Condorcet in praising de l'Hopital had incidentally thrown a small quantity of mud at Cardinal Bertrand, from which Bertrand de Moleville endeavours with spirit and with some literary ability to cleanse him. One of the Cardinal's nephews who died in 1594, became First President of the Parlement of Toulouse, and it was probably from him that Bertrand de Moleville traced his direct descent. Before the Revolution, as indeed at the present time, the Magistracy was more or less of an hereditary profession and many members of the family of Bertrand are to be found during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries among the

list of Judges and other officers of the Parlement of Toulouse. In one or two later notices of Bertrand, he is given the title of Marquis. During the eighteenth century, as after the Revolution, titles in France were adopted in a very loose and unauthorised fashion. In the case of Bertrand, I do not find that this title was bestowed upon him by any of his contemporaries, nor does he use it himself, either on the title-pages of his own works or in signing his letters.

I think therefore that it is safe to conclude that the more recent biographical notices are mistaken and that though a member of a reputable or even distinguished family, Bertrand bore no such title.

In the year 1774 Bertrand received the appointment of "Maitre des Requêtes,"<sup>1</sup> an office which he held until the year 1789 or 1790. In 1784 he was appointed Intendant<sup>2</sup> of Brit-

<sup>1</sup>The "Maitres des Requêtes" were officials of the Council of State. Their business consisting of enquiring into all petitions presented, for relief from taxation or other objects to the Council of State or the Council of Finance. They also arranged the business to be placed before each meeting of the Council. There were forty-eight of these officials, appointed by the Crown from candidates who were over thirty-one years of age and had served for at least six years in the lower grades of the Magistracy of the Parlements. They were paid by fees which varied from 150,000 to 200,000 livres. From this body were usually selected the Intendants of Provinces and occasionally the Councilors of State.

<sup>2</sup>The system of local government by Intendants of Provinces, is usually ascribed to Richelieu, but in point of fact it was not due to any one Sovereign or Statesman but grew by degrees until it acquired the character of a permanent Institution under the personal reign of Louis XIV. in the middle of the seventeenth century. Each province of France was nominally controlled by a Governor, usually a man of high rank who had served in the Army. This decorative official drew a large income or salary from the Province, but did little more. The real rulers of the Provinces were the Intendants, who, as the actual representatives of the Sovereign, possessed almost unlimited powers.



tany. The province was teeming with discontent and Bertrand's efforts to preserve law and order brought him into serious difficulties. During the years 1786 and 1787 the Estates and the Parlement had declared themselves in "scission" with the Intendant, meaning simply what we now call a "boycott," a refusal to hold communication with him either officially or in private life. In 1788 Bertrand was sent as a Royal Commissioner to Brittany to accompany the Marquis de Thiard, Military Governor of the Provinces, in order to carry out Lomenie de Brienne's plan of withdrawing the power of reg-

They, and their subordinate officers, known as Subdelegates, assessed and collected all such taxes as were not farmed out to contractors, maintained order, and regulated every detail of local business. At the same time, they were in rank and dignity (although they were usually addressed by the people as *Monseigneur*) inferior to the Governors and Magistrates of the Sovereign Courts.

They were usually selected from the lower ranks of the "Noblesse de la Robe" or from the educated middle classes. Frequently, as in the case of Bertrand de Moleville, they were chosen from the ranks of the "Maitre des Requêtes," and were liable to dismissal. They were as a rule, an honorable and able body of officials. Several of the best Ministers of the eighteenth century, such as Turgot, had served their apprenticeship in the art of governing, as Intendants. John Law, who had ample experience of the French system of government, said on one occasion to d'Argenson: "While I had control of the finances, I learnt a fact which I could never otherwise have believed; you must know that the whole government of this Kingdom rests in the hands of thirty Intendants. Your Parlements, States and Governors are nothing. You depend for the welfare, or misery, for the abundance or famine in your provinces on these thirty Maitres des Requêtes."

The Intendants of Provinces were abolished by a Decree of the National Assembly, 22 Dec. 1789, and were replaced by a second Decree, 7 Sept. 1790, by the elective Directories of the newly created Departments. One of Napoleon Bonaparte's earliest acts as First Consul, was to revive, with powers in some respects more arbitrary, in others more restricted, the Intendants under the title of Prefects; officials who remain to this day with much the same position as that assigned to them by the first Council.

istering decrees from the Sovereign Courts of the Parlement, and transferring it to a new "Plenary Court."<sup>3</sup>

The edict creating the new Court was at first registered by the Parlement of Rennes, but on the morning following the Registration, the Parlement again met and recanted its registration. "Lettres de Cachet" ordering the members of the Parlement to retire to their own homes were produced but were of no avail. Riots of the most serious nature broke out, which the Marquis de Thiard, kind-hearted but feeble after the manner of the French nobles of the period, tried to meet by exposing the large force of soldiery under his command with unloaded muskets, to the brickbats and insults of the mob.

The Intendant's residence was attacked and narrowly escaped destruction and Bertrand, unable to inspire M. de Thiard with anything approximating energy, returned to Paris to report matters to the Ministers, on the night of the 8th June. On the 6th December 1788, after futile efforts to induce Necker to take active measures to punish the Municipality of

<sup>3</sup> Cardinal Loménie de Brienne's proposal was more or less a copy of the new Parlement; known as the "Parlement Maupeou," substituted for the old Parlements by the Chancellor Maupeou in 1771.

This body had been dissolved by Louis XVI. in 1774 and the old Parlements restored to their former powers. In consequence of their repeated refusal to register edicts enforcing a tax upon lands, Loménie now designed to abolish the existing Parlements, thirteen in number, and to substitute for them a new Sovereign Court, named the "Cour Plénière," to be composed of certain Nobles and Judges, nominated by the King for life with the right of registering edicts; while lesser Courts were to be established in each Bailliage for administrative and judicial divisions of the country in whose hands the administration of justice should chiefly rest. The Edict establishing these Courts and suppressing the existing Parlements was registered in a "Lit de Justice" by Louis XVI. on the 8th May 1778.

The execution of the Edict caused such a serious and threatening disturbance throughout France that the scheme was abandoned and preparation was begun, first by Loménie himself and after his resignation by Necker, for summoning the States-General to meet in 1789.

Rennes for the riots, he resigned the office of Intendant of Brittany and retired on a pension of 12,000 livres, while retaining his post of Maitre des Requêtes.

From this period to the date of his appointment to the Ministry of Marine, Bertrand remained in Paris, fulfilling his duties at Versailles until October, 1789, after which month the Council of State, or what remained of it, followed the King to Paris. His house in the capital was in the Rue Barbette, which was situated in the Electoral District of the Minimes. He attended the meetings in his District and gives in Chapter VIII. an interesting account of the proceedings there, until the Jacobites, by sending "detachments of their boisterous adherents, to deride, insult and threaten all whose opinions were dictated by good sense and moderation," frightened or drew away all the respectable members. More royalist than the King (which indeed was not difficult), Bertrand tells us that for nine months of the years 1790-1791 he refused to wear the National Cockade, which Louis had himself worn since the 17th July 1789; one among many proofs that he was a man of more individuality than the mass of soft-hearted, sensibility-stricken officials among whom he lived, and that his politics were, as he himself describes them, "not aristocratic but royalist." On the resignation of that excellent man, the Count Fleurieu, May 1791, he was offered the Ministry of Marine, which he refused and thus escaped the grave difficulty into which he would have been thrown by the King's flight to Varennes. At this period the Ministry in office decided that it would be the more patriotic course to carry on the business of the nation during the King's suspension. Bertrand was by no means of this opinion. "No consideration," he says, "would have induced me to consent to become one of the accomplices of a monstrous government, in which the King, unworthily outraged and imprisoned in his own palace, had

not, nor could have, any part." Fortunately for his fellow ministers, as well as for himself, he was not put to the test. He had not long to wait before he was again pressed by the King himself, who was restored to some semblance of authority, to accept the Ministry of Marine, in succession to Admiral Thevenard, who was thankful to resign, after less than four months of office. This time Bertrand felt himself obliged to accept and was appointed Minister of Marine on the 4th October 1792, three days after the newly elected Legislative Assembly began its session. Every Minister of the Crown at this period had to encounter endless vexations and difficulties in their endeavours to carry on the Government, but no branch of the executive presented so impossible a task of making bricks without straw as that of the Navy, which included also the government of the colonies.

The Doctrine of the Sovereignty of the People involved paradoxes and obstacles enough in civil life, but when it spread to the sea and to the colonies it became absolutely unworkable.

The French Navy had proved to be a magnificent fighting force during the American War of Independence, and under Louis the Sixteenth's enlightened and generous patronage it had done excellent scientific work in exploration, but at this first touch of revolutionary experience it shrivelled into a state of chronic mutiny and disorder. The corps of naval officers was less aristocratic than that of the Army, but among them was a fair sprinkling of men of high family, while most of them were of gentle-birth and breeding. They came especially from the old country Noblesse of Normandy and Brittany. The seamen were enlisted for the most part by conscription, though the press-gang was occasionally used in the seaports when men were badly needed.

Both officers and seamen had their grievances. The officers showed the same jealous dislike of the civil branch of the

service as has always existed in England between executive officers and the Admiralty. The seamen complained of hard usage and wretched food, though I doubt whether their condition was as bad as that of our men before the mutinies at the Nore and elsewhere in 1797. But what really brought about the chronic state of mutiny which rent the French Navy during the years 1790 and 1793 were the powerful Jacobin clubs which established themselves at Brest and at every other seaport of France. Under the auspices of these clubs and of the sea-lawyers of the fleet, officers were insulted and openly disobeyed on board ship, and mobbed, beaten, occasionally assassinated when they set foot on shore. The cases of the murderous assault on Captain La Jaille and of the hopeless insubordination of the officials at Brest, related by Bertrand (Vol. I., 256-265, and Vol. II., 3-16), are only isolated instances of the universal disintegration of the French Navy. Naturally, the officers, finding their case desperate, fled to save their liberty or their lives, while the seamen deserted wholesale. Admiral Thevenard, Bertrand's immediate predecessor, reported that more than two-thirds of the officers and a large proportion of the seamen had abandoned their ships and were scattered throughout France and Europe.

The Constitutional Assembly, as usual when brought face to face with the people, truckled to the clubs and the armed mob of revolting sailors. They passed a series of decrees of astounding imbecility, more quack pills to cure the earthquake; repealed a mild code of naval discipline recently enacted; invented a new flag with the tricolors in the corner, and ordered the historic salute of "Vive le Roi" to be amended into a salute to the Nation, the Law and the King. Strange to say, these bold measures failed to keep the sailors from assaulting their officers, or the officers from deserting their ships. The Assembly therefore appointed a Committee which



drew up the new Constitution of the Navy referred to in Bertrand's Report upon his Ministry which traced the cause of all the disorder to the fact that many of the officers were gentlemen, and guarded against this terrible danger by abolishing the Naval Training Colleges and ordering that the officers of the future should be selected by examination, from the Merchant Service. When the French were called upon to meet the English at sea in 1793, many of the officers returned to duty, and gradually the Navy was restored to something like discipline, but the evil had struck into the heart of the service, and even Napoleon himself was unable to restore it to the high position it had held before the Revolution. The state of the colonies was, if possible, more dangerous and more incurable than that of the Marine. All the French West Indian Islands were in a state of uproar and confusion, the worst of all being San Domingo, the French portion of which we know to-day as Hayti. Under its French master during the half century which preceded the Revolution Hayti was far ahead of all other colonies, British, French or Spanish, in prosperity, civilization and culture. It supplied Europe with almost the whole of its sugar and cotton. In 1788 the population consisted of 27,717 white men, 21,808 mulattoes and free negroes, and 465,564 slaves. The white men were divided into planters, traders and other inhabitants of the towns, Port-au-Prince, Cap. Français and a few others, and the "mean whites," including a number of deserters from the Army and Navy; many of the mulattoes were well-to-do and fairly educated. All was apparent peace and prosperity until the Revolution fever took possession of the Island.

From this moment, Hayti became a sort of devil's cauldron of rival Assemblies, insurrection of mulattoes, civil war between the aristocratic planters, the constitutional burghers of the towns, the democratic "mean whites," while the mulattoes

fought for their own land against the whites at large. Meanwhile in France, Brissot, on his return from England in 1788, copied the emancipation movement by founding a Society of the Friends of the Blacks, which was joined by Mirabeau (who soon repented), Clavière, La Fayette, Grégoire, Sieyès, Pétion and many others, soon to become founders.

Under the influence of this Society a decree was passed by the Constituent Assembly, on the motion of Grégoire, 15th May 1791, declaring that every person, irrespective of color, dwelling on French soil, was a free man and enjoyed all the rights of citizenship, and that slavery was forever abolished in the French Colonies. The news was not long in reaching Hayti and its consequences were immediate. On the 23d August 1791, the whole body of slaves rose in insurrection and murdered, often under circumstances of the most terrible brutality, every white man, woman and child on whom they could lay hands. There is hardly a story in history so appalling as this. The French planters were literally swept out of the world.

The strange apostrophe so often quoted, "Perish <sup>4</sup> the colonies rather than a principle" was literally carried out. The principle of the abolition of slavery prevailed and the colony perished. It was under these circumstances that Bertrand delivered his able, statesmanlike speech on the colonies to the Legislative Assembly, reported in full.

<sup>4</sup> It seldom happens that historical utterances are exactly correct.

The words "Périssent les Colonies plutôt qu'un principe" (Perish the Colonies rather than a principle) were not spoken in this exact form.

The honour of inventing the most foolish political maxims in existence must be equally divided between Dupont de Nemours and Robespierre. In the debate on slavery and the West Indies, May, 1791, Dupont used the words: "Better to sacrifice the colonies than to abandon a principle." While Robespierre in the course of his speech said: "Perish the colonies rather than allow them to cost us our honour, our glory, our liberty."

His words and his actions were alike unavailing. The sympathies of the Legislative Assembly were first in favour of the interesting blacks, next with the mean whites, last and least of all with the planters, who after all were aristocrats deserving of their miserable fate. In any case the mutiny of the fleet rendered it impossible to send any effective aid to Hayti. It was not until 1801–1802 that an attempt was made by the first Court to recognise the colony.

A force of 35,000 soldiers under General Leclerc (Napoleon's brother-in-law) landed in Hayti in February, 1802. They treacherously succeeded in trapping Toussaint Louverture, the one and only great man born of Negro parents whom the Island has produced, and sent him to perish miserably in France. Having achieved this sinister victory, the French Army melted away from fever and starvation, losing 24,000 souls within a few weeks.

Hayti was again deserted and left to the tender mercies of the wretch Dessalines, elected President on the 8th October 1805, proclaimed as the Emperor Jacques I. shortly afterwards and assassinated 17th October 1806.

From that day to this the once prosperous and thriving colony has been steadily falling back into sheer and tawdry barbarism, intensified by Vaudoux worship.

Bertrand resigned his office, after five months of wasted energy, on the 9th March 1792. From that date to the 10th August, he remained in Paris, forming part of the so-called "Austrian Committee," a term which was first invented by Danton, immediately after the return of the royal family from Varennes, June 1791. He did his best to advise Louis XVI. and Marie Antoinette in circumstances which hardly admitted of advice;—vainly devising with the few faithful friends and subjects who still clung to their sovereign, one plan after another for his rescue or escape, and

attempting schemes for gaining, at any cost, a few months or even weeks of safety by buying off Jacobins, issuing false placards, or packing the galleries of the Assembly, schemes which he himself describes as "useless, costly and perilous," and yet which were the utmost that his energy or devotion could suggest. Judging, as we may now, from our knowledge of subsequent events, we can say with certainty that Bertrand made during this period one fatal blunder. Better by far for the royal family than all his efforts at bribery and intrigue, would have been the advice which he should have pressed upon the King and Queen, in or out of season, to become reconciled to the Constitutionalists. It was their only chance, and yet Bertrand seems never to have realised it. He held himself to be a pure Royalist and had nothing but jibes and jeers for Narbonne and Dumouriez and La Fayette and the other constitutional royalists, who formed the last hope of the Monarchy.

Immediately after the 10th August, the Assembly launched a Decree of Accusation against all the Ministers who had composed the King's Council during the month of November, 1791.

There is always an attraction in narratives of escape and adventure and no portion of these Memoirs possesses a greater interest than Bertrand's story of his concealment, escape and arrival in England on the 19th October 1792. Of his subsequent life little is known. I give here such disconnected fragments as I have been able to discover. Although throughout the greater part of his long exile he lived in England, he appears to have visited Italy in 1794. On the 9th August of that year, the Abbé Jous writes to that arch-plotter, the Count d'Antraigues, "Bertrand has returned to Florence. He maintains that his conduct needs no justification. Remusat declares that he is not guilty, but is an excellent royalist, but

I have told Remusat that I would not visit him until he has succeeded in purifying his character and re-establishing it in the opinion of honourable people."

This extraordinary letter requires a few words of explanation. It is unfortunate both in the interests of justice and of history that the same word "Émigré" should be used to describe two absolutely different classes; the one composed of the princes, nobles, ladies and others who fled from France in July, 1789, and the other of those who like Bertrand were driven from their own country by proscription and as the sole means of saving their lives. The "First Emigration," as it is called, took place immediately after the fall of the Bastille and the King's submission to the People of Paris, 14th to 18th July 1789.

The King's brother, the Count d'Artois, the Prince de Condé and their families set the evil example, which was followed by the great majority of the Nobles, members of the Magistracy, a few Bishops, a bevy of fashionable ladies and scores of children.

To emigrate became "good form," and the early Émigrés left France gaily and light-heartedly enough, leaving their sovereigns to bear the brunt of their cowardly desertion. Their punishment was more than adequate to their crime. For ten years or more they were doomed to wander through Europe, their properties confiscated, their lives forfeited if they dared to put foot on their native soil, their relatives who remained in France, imprisoned, guillotined, or fined till nothing remained to them. Many of them fought against their country, others plotted or schemed vainly.

One would suppose that four years' experience of the results of this flight and of the irreparable evils that followed it, would have brought repentance in its train and covered them with shame and confusion as with a cloak. Not at all. These

early deserters, the only voluntary Émigrés, as distinguished from the victims of proscription, were pleased to consider themselves as the only "pure" Royalists, and to pour their scorn and contempt on those whom duty, honour and courage had inspired to do their utmost for their King and country, until they were driven to take refuge from the storm which the early Émigrés, in no small degree, had conjured up. It is a piteous spectacle and I am glad to turn from it with the remark that such ostracism was a curious retribution for Bertrand's scorn of the Constitutionals while he remained in France. In February, 1800, Bertrand was engaged in a highly interesting controversy with Charles James Fox on the character of Louis XVI. and his share of responsibility for the war. There are many passages in the letter written by Fox, during this controversy, which are of high interest. I quote a few here which bear specially on Louis XVI. Fox writes on the 9th February 1800, "With respect to the unfortunate Monarch for whose memory you manifest a solicitude which does you honour, no man in this country lamented his death more than myself; no man was more shocked at the cruelty and injustice of those who condemned him to suffer, but these sentiments may surely be entertained without approving all he did, whether acting from the dictates of his own mind, or pursuant to the counsel of others. Still, as I am persuaded that very few princes would have acted better in his situation, and that that part of his conduct to which I cannot but impute error, was punished far beyond what it merited, I pity him much more than I censure him." I find no further mention of Bertrand until the spring of 1803, when he had the misfortune to be completely duped by a clever scoundrel named Méhée, who at this time took the name of Latouche, and is now known as Méhée de La Touche.

Méhée had been one of the secretaries of the Commune of



Paris in September, 1792, and in this capacity had signed orders for the payment of the "workers," i. e. murderers, in the prisons during the massacres. Since that time he had been a terrorist, a thermidorian, a reactionist and a terrorist once more. In 1802 the attention of the First Consul was called to him for a moment; and in consequence no time was lost in clapping him up in the prison of the Ile d'Oléron.

In December of the same year he escaped and made his way, first to the Channel Islands and then to London. Here he called on Bertrand, to whom he represented himself as a repentant Jacobin, weary of crime and desirous to find salvation by serving the royal cause. Bertrand lent the man money, introduced him to the English foreign office, and answered for the honesty of his conversion, consequently his services were accepted as a spy by the English Government, who employed him both at home and abroad and filled his empty pockets. Meanwhile he contrived to obtain similar employment from the French Government, at this time anxious and uneasy about the Émigrés in England. He apparently obtained some valuable information on the movements of George Cadoudal and his fellow conspirators, for after Cadoudal's capture he was given a full pardon and allowed to return to Paris. Then he published one of the most delightfully cynical books ever written in which he gives a full, and perfectly untruthful account of his double treachery. The book is entitled "*Alliance entre les Jacobins de France avec le Ministère Anglais; les premiers représentés par le Citizen Méhée, et le Ministère Anglais par MM. Flamand, Yorke et les Lords Pelham et Hawkesbury.*" In the book a great deal of space is devoted to Bertrand, who naturally enough was rewarded for showing Méhée peculiar kindness by receiving from him a peculiar portion of abuse and calumny.

In the year 1806, he was again so unfortunate as to be brought into painful contact with a fellow-countryman, of a very different social standing from Méhéc. This was the Marquis de Chamboras, whose end was a sordid tragedy.

Chamboras was a man of high family and position before the Revolution; a nephew of the Marshal de Biron and a cousin of the Duke de Lauzun. He took the Revolutionary side and became in 1790 Mayor and commandant of the National Guard of Sens. In 1792 he was promoted to the rank of Maréchal de Camp and from June 17th to August 1st, held the office of Minister of Foreign Affairs. At this time he became mixed up with some of Beaumarchais' commercial transactions and was denounced, as indeed was every Minister of the Crown, by Brissot. After the 10th August he escaped to England where he opened a shop and set up business as a watchmaker and jeweller.

It should be said that almost every Émigré, deprived as each was of all his property in France, endeavoured by some trade or mechanical work to add to the small pension granted to destitute refugees by the English Government. Many of these earned and deserved success. Not so Chamboras. He seems to have cheated or robbed numbers of his fellow exiles. In the case of Bertrand de Moleville, he obtained from him a supply of port wine to the value of £70, £500 in cash, for the purchase of linen, and a number of other sums, making a total capital of £2,000.

Bertrand afterwards found that Chamboras had swindled him out of the whole of the large sums entrusted to him and had lost it all in gambling houses. On the 22d February 1806, Chamboras was convicted at the Clerkenwell Sessions and sentenced to six months' imprisonment at Newgate. He died in abject misery shortly after his release.

From this trial and from allusions in his correspondence, I gather that Bertrand dealt in wine, and apparently in drugs also.

In 1808, he intervened in the long and bitter controversy between Count Joseph de Puisaye and his detractors.

The Count de Puisaye had been in chief command of the Quiberon expedition in 1795, and the miserable fiasco in which it resulted was generally attributed to him by his brother Émigrés, some of whom accused him of treachery, others of personal cowardice. In 1808, Puisaye, in the eighth volume of his *Memoirs*, devoted to his own defence, published some exceedingly unpleasing remarks on the Duke d'Avary, the nobleman who had assisted the Count de Torrence (Louis XVIII.) to escape from France in June, 1791, and who was now the King's most confidential friend. In reply the Duke d'Avary retaliated in a report addressed to Louis XVIII. on the Quiberon expedition.

Bertrand's part in this controversy was that of a peacemaker. His sympathies were with Puisaye, who was a personal friend. He seems to have done all in his power to induce him to abstain from publishing the violent attack on d'Avary in his eighth volume. In the British Museum are preserved a number of letters, several hundreds in all, written by Bertrand between the years 1808 and 1815 to the Count de Puisaye, the Count de Brecourt and others. Apart from their bearing on the interminable Puisaye controversy, they contain a great deal of interesting information as to the proceedings of the comparatively small number of ultra-royalist Frenchmen who still remained in England. They give also some account of Louis XVIII., and his brother the Count d'Artois; on their relations with the English Government, and on their rather sordid and melancholy Court at Hartwell House. One of the most attractive of these letters dated March, 1811, was

written to Count de Puisaye who was living at Fursden House, Plympton, Devonshire, and was chiefly dependent on a pension granted to him by the British Government, upon the management of his money affairs. Bertrand, in this letter, draws up for Puisaye's guidance, an annual budget from which it appears that it was possible in that golden age, to keep three servants, horses, kitchen and flower gardens and all sorts of pleasant things, including wine, "rhum," and any quantity of cider and small beer on an income of £350 per annum. The budget and the accompanying excellent advice is too remote from our subject and too lengthy to be given here, but I recommend it to the attention of students of political economy as one of the most interesting documents on prices and values I have ever met with. It will be found in Vol. LXXVIII of the Puisaye Papers in the British Museum (MSS. Addit. 8049).

These letters throw some light on Bertrand's biography during the long years of his exile. He lived in a house of his own, which he called Bertrand's Cottage, at Feltham Hill near Staines, from the year 1808 (and probably earlier) to April or May, 1814, when he sold "Bertrand's Cottage" and returned to France. In his Memoirs referring to the earlier part of the year 1791, Bertrand writes: "From this time I confined myself to my own family and to the society of a few friends, only occupying myself in arranging my moderate fortune in such a manner as would enable me to leave the Kingdom when I could no longer remain in it in safety."

The allusion to his family refers mainly to his wife, the daughter of a Monsieur Vernier.

Madame Bertrand did not accompany her husband in his flight, after which she and her father were imprisoned on the charge of conniving at his escape. On the 11th and 15th February, 1793, Bertrand wrote to the President of the Con-

vention to exculpate his wife and father-in-law from this charge. I am sorry to say that I can find nothing more about either M. Vernier or Madame Bertrand. Moreover Bertrand speaks of his "mother, brothers, sisters, wife and children, all of whom remained in France and were shut up in different prisons during the dreadful tyranny of Robespierre." It may be presumed that both were released, since their names do not appear in any of the lists of those who were tried before the Revolutionary Tribunal. In Bertrand's correspondence, I find no reference to his wife or children, from which I am forced to the conclusion that they did not follow him to England.

Other members of his family, mentioned in these Memoirs, are his father, who died at Toulouse in September, 1792, and his younger brothers, one of whom was a Knight of Malta and the other a Priest. How far Bertrand succeeded in transferring his "moderate fortune" to England, it is impossible to say. The fact that he possessed £2,000 in the year 1806 is shown by the case of the Marquis de Chamboras, but whether this represented the whole, or a portion, of the property which he transferred to England before his flight, or brought with him, I cannot tell. It may be taken for granted that the entire sum was consumed by Chamboras and that he recovered none of it. He drew, so far as I can discover, no pension from the British Government. Once or twice in the course of these letters, he mentions his own impecunious condition, but always in a good-humoured and light-hearted vein. His poverty must have been of the respectable order, since I gather from many allusions that he enjoyed an income, derived either from his private means or from his profits as a wine-merchant, sufficient to enable him to entertain his friends, cultivate his garden, and buy the books which he required for the literary studies which formed the serious occupation of his life.

In the bibliographical note at the close of the Introduction will be found a list of the books and pamphlets which Bertrand produced during these years. It is to be hoped that they did something to ward off the "sordid misery of pecuniary embarrassment" from which so many of the *Émigrés*, and possibly Bertrand himself, suffered.

On his return to France he is said to have been coldly received by Louis XVIII. and his Court.

If this is so, and it rests on rumour only, it may have been due to the support which he gave to Count Puisaye which may have given offence to the King who held Puisaye's adversary, the Duke d'Avary, in high esteem, during his lifetime and after his death in 1811. In 1814, 1815, and 1816, Bertrand vainly endeavoured to recover for himself: First, a renewal of the pension of 12,000 francs which had been granted to him when he resigned the post of Intendant of Brittany; second, the retiring pension to which Ministers of States were entitled, and third, the repayment of a sum of 600,000 francs which he claimed to have advanced to Louis XVI.

I have unfortunately no evidence as to whether he succeeded in obtaining any of these sums, nor have I been able to discover any details of his later days, beyond the fact that he died, at the age of 74, on the 19th October 1818. His character reveals itself so clearly in his own autobiography that there is no need to dwell upon it here.

He was unquestionably a strong, resolute, determined man, honest, straightforward and upright, and perfectly ready to go all lengths in support of his convictions or his own cause. It is clear that he had the defects of his qualities. He was irascible, prejudiced and possibly not over-scrupulous in his dealings with his enemies. He was remarkable as being the only Minister, appointed after the King had signed the



Constitution, who was neither a Constitutionalist nor a Girondist. He was distinctly superior in intellect and in courage to most of his colleagues, perhaps to all of them except Dumouriez and Narbonne. It might be said that had he not been too good a Royalist he would have followed the example of the larger number of his colleagues in returning to France during the consulate and taking office under Napoleon. He was, so far as we can judge, exactly the sort of man who would have gained Napoleon's confidence and risen to greatness. He would then have been known to us as one of that remarkable body who gave to France the Code Civile, restored the finances and administered her conquests throughout Europe. As it is, after blazing into meteoric flame for a few months as one of the last defenders of a lost cause, he disappears into the night of obscurity and exile.

Bertrand de Moleville's Memoirs possess a twofold interest and value. First, they give us the most accurate and living portrait extant of Louis XVI. during the last year of his so-called "Reign," a portrait which has never been surpassed and remains as the most authentic source on which we can draw for our knowledge of his actual character and manner of thought and action. Secondly, they supply us with a vivid and obviously veracious account of the history of the Constitutional Monarchy during the short period of its existence, and make clear to us the cause and method of its fall.

Take first the character of Louis XVI. No one can study the life of this unfortunate King without being struck by the curious resemblance in outward circumstances, between himself and Charles I. Both inherited from a predecessor a throne shaken by omens of change and revolution. Both were men of high moral character, earnestly desiring to do their duty by the people and ready "to scorn delights and live laborious days," on their behalf. Both entertained strong

theological convictions and in each case the tenacity with which they clung to their convictions was among the chief causes of their ruin; since Charles owed his downfall rather to his refusal to abandon Episcopacy and the Prayer-Book than to any other single cause, and Louis to his refusal to sanction the decrees banishing and otherwise tormenting the orthodox clergy. Both married an unpopular wife, and in each case the husband was justly accused of being strongly and disastrously influenced by the sterner counsels of the wife.

The circumstances and incidents which befell each during the revolutionary period of the reign were curiously similar.

To give a few only of the more obvious of these,—The meeting of the Long Parliament and of the National Assembly, both mainly due to the financial embarrassments of the two Sovereigns. The attempt to seize the five members and the Royal Séance of the 28th May 1789. The flight of Charles to the Isle of Wight and that of Louis XVI. to Varennes. The trial of Charles and of Louis, in either case by a Court which held no legal jurisdiction over its Sovereign. Each moreover was charged with treason to the Nation by calling in the assistance of the foreigners and rebels to make war against their own countrymen. The main charge against Charles being that of bringing the Irish Rebels to England and inciting the French to make war on his behalf; that against Louis of secret correspondence inviting the Émigrés and the coalesced Powers to invade France. Finally each was executed and each showed the same manly resignation and dignity during the supreme hour of his death.

The famous lines on the death of Charles

“ He nothing common did or mean  
Upon that memorable scene  
But with his keener eye  
The axe's edge did try,

Nor called the Gods with vulgar spite  
To vindicate his helpless right  
But bowed his comely head  
Down as upon a bed."

might be applied with almost equal truth to Louis XVI. save for the one word "comely," which exactly expresses the appearance of Charles I. but is in no sense of the word applicable to Louis XVI. All these similarities, which might be almost indefinitely extended, and which appear at first sight singularly close analogies, cease to hold good when we consider the deep underlying divergencies between the character and the actions of the two Sovereigns. Charles I. was possessed by a profound conviction of the justice of his own cause. He believed as firmly in his divine right to rule, as he did in any of the fundamental doctrines of Christianity, and he held that his subjects in taking arms against their King were not merely guilty of a political crime but were placing themselves in open rebellion against the Divine Law. His last words on the scaffold, "For the people, truly I desire their liberty and freedom as much as any one whatsoever; but I must tell you that their liberty and freedom consists in having government — those laws by which their lives and their goods may be most their own. It is not their having a share in the government; that is nothing appertaining unto them. A subject and a sovereign are clearly different things; and therefore until . . . you put the people in that liberty they will never enjoy themselves," represent the deep conviction and guiding motive of his whole life. Hence he was not merely ready for action, civil or military, but eager to assert and to prove by the issue of war that he was the lawful Sovereign of the Realm which God had appointed and consecrated him to govern. Hence, too, the sanguine nature of the man. He never lost hope, because from first to last he

never doubted that, in one way or another, God would protect his own. I do not think it would be an exaggeration to assert that up to the moment of his death, there lingered in the mind of Charles I. constant hope of some manifestation, natural or supernatural, in his favour.

He possessed, in a high degree, the power of attracting respect, sympathy and devotion. His personal appearance was as royal as it was handsome; his manner, full of dignity and, when he wished it to be so, of sweetness; his artistic tastes; his occasional utterances of genuine humour; all these qualities attracted to him the hearts of his followers and sometimes of his open enemies. The sentiment expressed in Lovelace's lines: "The sweetness, mercy, majesty, And glories of my King, When I shall voice aloud how good He is, how great should be," or the almost frantic outburst of sorrow which broke from Montrose when he heard of Charles' death, were shared by vast numbers of their countrymen. One of the most curious points about the great collection of Civil War Pamphlets in the British Museum is the number and the quality of the eulogies, which in spite of all the laws which fettered the press, were published during the years which followed Charles' execution. Louis XVI. was the exact opposite of all this.

I have, in the general Introduction of this series, alluded to Dumont's shrewd illustration of the self-confidence of the Frenchman: "I often used to think that if a hundred persons indiscriminately were stopped in the streets of London, and the same number in the streets of Paris and a proposal made to each individual to undertake the government of his country, ninety-nine would accept the offer at Paris and ninety-nine would refuse it in London." Unhappily for himself and for his country, Louis XVI. was the one Frenchman in a hundred who would have refused. On bidding farewell to

Malesherbes in May, 1776, he said, "I only wish that I too could lay down my office," and similar utterances can be found all through his reign.

He never showed, and apparently never felt, the smallest pride or even belief in his own position as King of France. He was ready at all times to abjure the dignity and authority which he had inherited from a long line of ancestors if he thought that by doing so he could benefit his people. From the earliest days of his reign his mind was as much set on reform as was that of his brother-in-law the Emperor Joseph, but he was incapable of appreciating the Emperor's words, "After all, my business in life is to be a King." Few sovereigns or statesmen have ever borne through life so genuine a love of the People or so ardent a longing for their welfare; yet the word represented to him much more nearly the "Sovereign People" of the Social Contract than the subjects who were entrusted to him to govern. Closely akin to this was the one determination to which he consistently adhered, that no provocation should draw him into a civil war or cause him to order the blood of his people to be shed. In all other respects his mind was in a state of perpetual uncertainty and change. Monsieur (afterwards Louis XVIII.) said to Mirabeau, "To try to hold my brother steadfast to any course of action is like trying to keep a set of oiled billiard balls together." He never gave his undivided confidence to anyone. He listened patiently to each adviser in turn, but the impression made upon him, however strong at the moment, was effaced by the next counsellor. "It is only I and Turgot who love the people" he said, yet he was easily persuaded to dismiss Turgot, Calonne, Malesherbes and a host of others, ending with the last two Ministers who offered him a chance of salvation, Narbonne and Dumouriez. Consequently none of his advisers or Ministers found it possible to have any true

confidence in him, however strong the devotion or pity for their unfortunate master may have been. At the same time he was of a singularly upright, truth-loving nature, keenly desirous to be absolutely honest in public and in private life and bitterly repentant when, following the advice of others, he erred from the almost impossible path of political integrity during the Revolution.

The Court of Versailles during the earlier years of the reign of Louis XVI. formed the most polished, witty and brilliant circle the civilised world has ever known. It was here that the art of living agreeably to oneself and to others had attained its highest perfection. Most of its members were, or affected to be, of advanced opinions. Liberation of thought and action were pretty nearly universal. It was the age of sentiment and sophistry, the age when "even vice itself lost half its evil by losing all its grossness."

Montesquieu was the prophet of the serious and the elderly, Voltaire, d'Alembert and Rousseau the guides and the philosophers of the young and light-hearted; but all alike had acquired the art of clothing the crudest or most revolutionary propositions in polished epigram, light repartee or graceful allusion. They knew exactly how to "hint a fault, or hesitate dislike" with the old system or the old religion in terms so graceful and so airy that even a Bishop or a Jansenist Magistrate was moved rather to a smile than to a rebuke. Over this brilliant Court presided Louis XVI. undistinguished almost to ugliness in face and figure, shy, awkward and either silent or plain-spoken to a fault. Nor did he ever learn to express the sentiments of kindness and gratitude which he often felt at heart.

On every critical occasion, when a few vigorous, inspiring words might have turned defeat into victory he was utterly incapable of saying them.

Even on that supreme day the 10th August 1792, when the King, the Queen and their family passed through the ranks of the National Guard, Louis only muttered a few inarticulate words. In despair the Queen said to Madame Campan on their return, "The King has shown no energy. It has done more harm than good." In fact, his presence at a critical moment never failed to depress and dishearten his friends and to give fresh courage to his enemies. This may, in part, have been the result of his profound sense of his own deficiencies, and of his conviction that fate was against him. When he was leaving Versailles in October, 1789, he was seen to look earnestly at a picture of Charles I. and was heard to say to himself, "Yes, my fate will be the same as his."

Many of his conversations with Bertrand given in these volumes are darkened by the same hopeless note, especially that on the projects of escape, in which the King says—"There may be a possibility of my escape,—but there are many chances against it. I am an unlucky man;" no casual utterance made in a fit of depression, but the expression of a profound conviction. Both contemporaries and historians of later years are agreed on Louis XVI.'s infirmity of purpose, his want of energy, his supine submission to fate, and his total incapacity to "ride on the thunder and subdue the storm" of the Revolution. They are equally agreed on his genuine goodness, kindness and truthfulness and on the passive courage with which he endured indignities and sufferings which few men have ever been called upon to undergo.

Malesherbes' opinion is well worthy of note—"This extreme sensibility, so aimiable in private life and in times of tranquillity, often becomes in times of revolution more fatal to a King than certain vices would have been." I think that there can be no doubt that Bertrand de Moleville is perfectly justified in asserting "that his natural capacity was



very far above mediocrity and that had it been cultivated by an education better calculated to fit him for his future rank in life, he would take a place amongst the best and ablest of our Kings." No testimony to Louis' intelligence is so strong as the evidence afforded by his last Will, an unquestionably genuine document, written by himself alone without the aid or advice of any human being. No one can read this Will, the text of which will be found in Vol. II., p. 322, without observing with what clearness and power of expression it is drawn up. Its literary merit is somewhat lost in the translation, but even as it reads in English, it is obviously the work of a man capable of feeling generous and noble thoughts and expressing them in simple and dignified language.

No words can better state the case for Louis than the eloquent, yet sober and truthful peroration of Raymond de Sèze, the youngest of the King's three advocates,—“Louis mounted the throne at the age of twenty and even at that early age he set an example of an irreproachable life. He was governed by no weak or corrupt passions. He was economical, just, and impartial. From the first day of his reign, he proved himself to be the benefactor of his country. The people desired the removal of a burdensome tax. He removed it. They wished for the abolition of serfdom. He abolished it throughout his own domain. They prayed for a reform in the Criminal law. He reformed it. They demanded that thousands of Frenchmen, whom the vigour of our legal system had excluded from their political rights, should enjoy them. He conceded the rights. They longed for liberty. He gave it; he even anticipated their wishes.

“Yet it is this same people which now demands his punishment. I add no more. I stand before the Tribunal of History.

“Remember that your decision will be judged by that

Tribunal and that its decision will last through all ages."

The name of Queen Marie Antoinette appears only once or twice in these pages. Her history may be studied in the *Memoirs of Madame Campan*, a work of the highest value and interest, which is issued as one of the present series. I propose to say only a few words on the position which she held and the influence which she exercised during the one year, 1791-1792, covered by the present volume.

I do not look upon Marie Antoinette as possessing a great or commanding character. Of all the high qualities, tact, judgment, the power of influencing and governing men, which had raised her mother, Maria Theresa, to the high position which she held among the sovereigns of Europe, Marie Antoinette inherited only one,—courage. Her nature was essentially feminine. She loved her family and her friends and she hated her enemies, and those whom she supposed to be so. She had suffered and suffered terribly from the Revolution.

Whatever it had done for others, to her it had brought nothing but pain, misery and long imprisonment. She could not even breathe the air at her own windows without encountering such unendurable insults as those she describes in speaking to Dumouriez. See Introduction, page 55.

Attached as she was to her husband, she could not fail to understand the weakness and apathy of his character. On one occasion she said, "The King wants energy; he has great courage but it is all passive. This want of self-confidence is the result of his bad education. He has a perfect terror of commanding and he dreads making a speech. He was treated like a mere child, and an unhappy child, by Louis XV. and his people, until he was twenty-one. This is what has made him so shy. Situated as we are, a few spirited words to the respectable people of Paris, who are really attached to him, would increase our strength a hundredfold; but he cannot

nerve himself to say them. If only I could act for myself, how gladly I would mount a horse. But if I did, it would only be to furnish our enemies with fresh arms against us. The cry against the Austrian woman would spread all over France and I should only detract still further from the dignity of the King. A Queen, if she is not regent, must remain silent and inactive. She has nothing to do but prepare for death."

A year earlier, before the flight to Varennes which doubled her sufferings and her forebodings, Burke had written,—“I hear and I rejoice to hear that this great lady bears the imprisonment of her husband, and her own captivity, and the exile of her friends, and the whole weight of her accumulated wrongs, with a serene patience; in a manner fitted to her rank and race, and becoming the offspring of a sovereign distinguished for her piety and her courage.” This eulogy is thoroughly deserved. Her courage was lofty, but can it be considered wonderful or even blameworthy if such sufferings as she had undergone had warped her judgment and made her see in the Constitutionalists and especially in those who were of the Noblesse, who had as she held, deserted their order to pander to the mob, her bitterest enemies?

In this hatred she was, as I hope to show presently, absolutely in the wrong, but who can say that it was not natural that she should feel as she did.

These Memoirs, as I have already said, not only contain the best account we possess of the last year of Louis XVI's reign, but give us a most valuable history of the short-lived Constitutional Monarchy which came into existence when Louis XVI. signed the Constitution, 14th September 1791, and ended on the 10th August 1792. There are many Memoirs (the best being those of Madame Roland) written from the other, the attacking side, which make us thoroughly

acquainted with the proceedings of the Legislative Assembly, the rise of the Girondist party and the steps which preceded and followed the downfall of the Monarchy, but there is no other source of information as to the defence which the King and his Ministers vainly endeavoured to oppose to the growing forces of Republicanism. The question must occur to every student of the Revolution as he studies the history of the years 1791–1792; why did the Constitution of 1791 fail so utterly and so swiftly? why did the Constitutional Monarchy, supported as it undoubtedly was by the great mass of respectable, well-to-do citizens of Paris and peasant-proprietors of the provinces, succumb with scarcely an effort to the assaults of the Jacobins and Brissotins? The answers to these questions will be found, very clearly set forth in these volumes.

I do not design to give here any sketch, however slight, of the course of events during the Revolution. I propose merely to offer a few brief notes on the position of the King and his Ministers, and on their relations with the Legislative Assembly, October 1791 to 10 August 1792, to serve as a commentary on the history of this eventful year, as given in these volumes.

Thus, in order to make it clearly understood why Louis XVI. found himself forced to sign the Constitution without a word of amendment, it is desirable to explain what were the causes and the results of the “accursed journey” to Varennes. I quote the expression which the King, with unwonted energy of language, used in speaking to Bertrand of that untoward event. It may be truly said that the power of the Monarchy came to an end on the 23d June 1789, after the Royal Séance described in Chapter V. of these Memoirs. On that memorable day Louis XVI., after announcing that if the States-General failed him he alone would ensure the happiness of his People, positively commanded the three Orders to return, each to the Chamber allotted to it. The Third Order deliberately

disobeyed the royal command. Mirabeau's words to the High Chamberlain are so well known as hardly to bear repetition: "If you have orders to make us leave the place you must use force, for we will not stir from our seats except at the point of the bayonet."

No force was used; the King informed of the answer, which was of course the announcement of an open rebellion, replied that if the Members of the Third Order would not quit the hall, there was no course but to leave them there, the feeblest reply of any ruler at any period, on record.

From that day Louis XVI., though he may still be held after a fashion to reign, had certainly ceased to govern. Next followed the days of October, when the King and royal family were carried in brutal triumph to the Tuileries. In 1790 the royal family, without opposition, spent the Easter fortnight at St. Cloud. On the 22d August of that year the King most unwillingly signed the Decree on the Civil Constitution of the Clergy. On the 2d April 1791, Mirabeau died. On the 18th April of the same year, being the Monday before Easter, the King and royal family ordered their carriages to be prepared to take them for the second time to St. Cloud. Rumour, which for once was true, ran through Paris that the King's object in spending his Easter at St. Cloud, was to have the Easter Mass celebrated by a priest who had not taken the civic oath. Consequently a vast mob gathered in the gardens of the Tuileries, surrounded the carriages in which the royal family were seated, and cut the traces. The mobs were joined by the National Guard and in spite of the urgent appeals of La Fayette to the Guard and of Bailly, Mayor of Paris, to the mob, the King, the Queen and the other members of the royal family after remaining four terrible hours seated in their carriages exposed to the insults and indignities of the mob, returned to the palace, which they now knew to be their

prison. It was this, and the death of Mirabeau, whom Louis recognised as the one statesman who could restore to him his freedom, which induced the King to risk the chance of escaping from Paris.

The idea was by no means a new one. In July, 1789, he had meditated a retreat to Fontainebleau; De Breteuil had urged him to take refuge at Metz, and Mirabeau had repeatedly advised him to retreat to Lyons or some other town in the interior of France. At the same time, Mirabeau strongly and wisely objected to any project of a flight towards the frontier, lest it should be said that the King meditated an escape from France or intended to join a foreign army. All these counsels the King had rejected, partly from his native indecision and partly from the dread, which haunted him continually, of causing a civil war. The futile attempt which we know as the "flight to Varennes" was planned by three persons, Count Axel Fersen, the devoted and heroic friend of Marie Antoinette; the Marquis de Bouillé, famous for the courage and taet with which he had suppressed the mutiny of the Army at Nancy, and the Baron de Breteuil, who was now an émigré residing at Brussels. The King stipulated that he should not leave France unless he was forced to do so, and it was therefore determined that the objective of his retreat should be Montmedy, a small town situated about 170 miles northeast of Paris and about 30 miles from Sedan. It was within easy reach of the French frontiers, and formed part of the district in which the Army of the Meuse, commanded by the Marquis de Bouillé, was stationed. Bouillé's courage and fidelity were beyond question, and at Montmedy itself he had three regiments of cavalry which were supposed to be the least mutinous in the French Army.

Few episodes of history have been the subject of so much controversy as the flight to Varennes. The account given in

these Memoirs by the principle actor in the drama was after the Restoration combated by the Duke de Choiseul and the Baron de Goguelat.

In fact there is not a single incident of the flight which has not been keenly contested and differently stated both by contemporaries and by subsequent writers. There is a double interest attaching to the whole story. First, the extraordinary series of small accidents and petty mistakes and mischances which occurred at every stage of the journey, each of which contributed to its final breakdown at a place within easy reach of the King's goal, and when apparently all danger was at an end. Secondly, the fact that no episode in history affords so many instances of the difficulty of arriving at the exact truth of an historical event. The conclusion which has now been universally adopted is that two only of the persons connected with the attempt did their duty without miscalculation and without flinching. Fersen, who succeeded in the most difficult part of the whole adventure by getting the royal family safely out of Paris, and Bouillé, whose failure to rescue them was due to no fault of his own but solely to the mistakes of his subordinates.

All the other officers either lost their heads or fell into a series of blunders and misfortunes so extraordinary as to seem almost supernatural. The fatality which marred and haunted every action of Louis XVI. reached its culmination point at Varennes. Even in the town itself, a few bold words and an assumption of something resembling the dignity of a Sovereign might have saved the King and his family. The Duchess d'Angoulême in her account of the journey says, "We then alighted and in crossing the street six mounted dragoons pressed us, but unfortunately they had no officer with them. If there had been, six resolute men would have intimidated them all, and might have saved the King."



There were sixty dragoons within a stone's throw. Later on, the King when asked to give his orders, could find nothing better to say than the miserable words "I am a prisoner. I can give no orders." It is very possible, of course, that in the state of chronic mutiny of the Army at this period, even Bouillé himself might have found it impossible to guard the King and his family in safety, in which case he must have made his way across the frontier into the Austrian Netherlands.

If so, it is by no means certain that the disappearance of Louis XVI. from France would not have been the best possible solution of an otherwise insoluble problem. In any case no greater misfortune is imaginable than his wretched action, with all its long train of miserable and disastrous results.

At a later period the King declared that had he been alone he would have risked all; he could not of course foresee the future, nor could he know that no greater misfortune could have befallen his family or himself than to be dragged back to Paris, where insult, misfortune, misery and death awaited himself, his wife, his sister and his son, and long imprisonment his daughter, the sole survivor of his house.

The flight to Varennes and the capture of Louis XVI. form a crisis in the history of France which opened a new era of the Revolution. Pasquier, who was present in Paris at the time, gives a graphic picture of the effect produced by the news when it was announced. "At first," he says, "no one doubted of the success of the enterprise. The King had twelve hours' start, and it was to be presumed that every precaution had been taken to secure his safety whether, as most people supposed, he intended to cross the frontier, or whether he designed to take up his residence in one of the great cities of France.

"In either case the inhabitants of Paris found themselves in

a highly critical position. They had been in the habit of considering the presence of the King in their midst as the best possible guarantee for their own security. The men of the Revolution especially found themselves in a position of the greatest possible difficulty and knew not where to look for aid. The Army gave them the gravest inquietude. It needed so little to bring the soldiers back to loyalty. When they saw the King in their midst, the odds were that they would become royalists again and no one could say how far royalism might carry them."

This state of agitation did not last long. The news that the King had been found, arrested and was actually being carried back to Paris, changed the mood of the Assembly from cold terror to anger, which was heated red hot by the publication of the King's manifesto, drawn up by himself on the night of his departure, wherein he declared that all the decrees of the Assembly to which he had given his assent were null and void because he had been forced to sanction them while he was not free to do otherwise. By swift degrees fresh parties were formed in Paris and throughout France. The Jacobin and Cordeliers clubs thundered for the King's deposition, while the respectable classes, the lawyers, tradesmen and so forth, content with the solid gains they had acquired, and alarmed at the virulence of the clubs and patriotic journals, were in favour of the continuance or restriction of such authority as the King yet possessed.

The Assembly underwent similar changes. Members who had hitherto voted for radical measures, such as Dupont, Barnave and the Lameths, joined the moderate Constitutionalists, giving them a decided majority, while Robespierre, Pétion and others took the side of the clubs. The Assembly, on the 16th July, suspended the King until the moment when he should sign the Constitution; when his prerogative, his consti-

tutional guard and his civil list should be restored to him. On the next morning a vast crowd flocked to the Champ de Mars to sign a petition drawn up under the auspices of Danton, Robespierre, Pétion and Marat in favour of the deposition of Louis XVI. La Fayette and the Mayor Bailly, who had thrown in their lot with the Constitutionalists, proclaimed the meeting and ordered out the battalions of the National Guard on whom they had most reliance. The result was what is known as the "Massacre of the Champ de Mars." Some three hundred persons were killed and wounded during the day, a few by the muskets of the National Guard, the greater number by being crushed or trampled upon in the flight of the mob. The immediate result was the victory of the Constitutionalists; Danton, Robespierre and Marat disappeared, and Camille Desmoulins ceased to publish. La Fayette was warmly congratulated by the Assembly. But from this moment the division, not hitherto clearly marked, between the middle class and the clubs and the populace began and soon showed that it contained every element of growth. It is seldom that I find myself in agreement with the extremists of the French Revolution, but at this crisis I am strongly of opinion that they were in the right.

In taking such a step as the flight to Varennes, Louis should have been resolved never to return alive, and he should have carried out that resolution. As it was he came back like a recaptured convict. His authority (or what remained of it), his reputation, his popularity, were all lost forever. The republicans (the term arose at this time) argued that the King has forfeited the public confidence and can never recover it. The nation can never forget his flight after the positive oaths he had previously taken that he was free. He cannot himself forget that he has been brought back by force, and that he reigns by mere sufferance over a people who despise him as

either a weakling or a traitor. The elements of the Monarchy have been destroyed while the King himself is looked upon as a conspirator; nor could anything be more preposterous than to confide the guardianship of the Constitution to one who has declared himself its enemy. These were strong arguments and they were backed by Condorcet, who said, "If a republic were formed by a revolution and the people rose against the Court, the consequences would be terrible; but if a republic be formed at present, while the Assembly is all powerful, the passage from monarchy to republicanism will not be difficult; and it is much better that it should take place now when the King, from the situation in which he has placed himself, is reduced to nothingness, than when sufficient power has been restored to him to render his overthrow an effort." These words are so prophetic that it is difficult to believe that they were not composed after, rather than before, the actual overthrow of the Monarchy. They are however quoted from Dumont, who is certainly one of the most trustworthy authorities on this period of the Revolution.

The majority of the Assembly were not of this opinion. Some of them held that a nominal sovereign of the House of Bourbon was a necessity of the State; others thought a republic was the ideal form of government although it was too dangerous at the present era; while all had begun to fear the rising power of the Jacobins more than the falling power of the Royalists. On the 5th August the Constitution was reported as complete and submitted to the Assembly for a final revision. A few changes of a moderate kind were introduced, one of which is a curious illustration of the vanity of human wishes. On the 30th August, a decree was issued that no Convention should be summoned to alter the Constitution until the close of thirty years from the present date.

On the 4th September Louis XVI. appeared in the Assem-

bly and swore to accept and be faithful to the Constitution. A general amnesty was granted for all political offences prior to the final passing of the Constitution and his amnesty was announced as closing the Revolution. Louis XVI., formerly by the grace of God, King of France and Navarre, now became the first constitutional monarch under the style and title of Louis, by the grace of God and by the Constitutional Law of the State, King of the French, a title which within one year was to be changed to that of Louis Capet, the last of the Tyrants. In order to understand the history of the eventful year of which Bertrand writes, it is necessary to have some knowledge of the exact position which the King and his Ministers held under the Constitution. It is a complete mistake to attribute the failure of the Constituent Assembly to construct a workable monarchical Constitution, to the want of men of light and leading in their midst. There were among the Constitutional reformers statesmen of as high intellect, experience and character as any of the leaders of the English Parliament of the eighteenth century.

These statesmen, had their counsels been followed, might have founded an excellent Constitution, combining the freedom of the subject, with the dignity of the Crown. They might have saved France from the tyranny of the Terror, the corruption of the Directory and the drain of more than twenty years of desperate warfare. Among them were such men as Clermont Tonnerre, Lally Tolendal, Malouet, Mounier, the Dukes de La Rochefoucauld, and de Liancourt, and, when unshackled from the chains of fiery rhetoric and demagoguery, Mirabeau himself.

All these, and many others, were in favour of a Second Chamber — hereditary, official or elective; the preservation of the Royal prerogative, including the absolute Veto of the Crown; the modernization of the Church, the Law, and the

Military and Naval Services. All were in favour of the one great reform required, the opening to every man, of whatever rank or station, a possible career. But, in that tumultuous Assembly, where every member was a law unto himself, it was followers rather than leaders who were required. If the Assembly were to be moved or awed into any sort of unanimity it was by declamation or vehemence, not by the measured exposition of experience, knowledge or political wisdom. They could, on occasion, be influenced by the wandering-star-like bursts of Mirabeau's eloquence, or the enthusiasm of Barnave, or even the chivalry of Cazales; but, as a rule, the influence of abstract, windy declaration drawn from Rousseau or from misapprehensions of Greek and Roman philosophy, was far greater than that of speakers who drew their inspiration from experience or from their knowledge of the needs and requirements of the French nation of their own day. It is curious to note that more than one speaker, amid the cheers of his colleagues, reproached the admirers of the British Constitution with daring to imitate a Parlement which had basely put to death its King. In justice to the Assembly it must be remembered that in dealing with the royal authority they could not forget that it was not a century since Louis XIV. could say with perfect truth, "L'Etat; c'est moi." Certainly neither of his successors could by any stretch of the imagination be termed despots; yet theoretically the power in their hands and in that of the Ministers was undoubtedly despotic, and it was to curb this theoretical despotism that the Constitution was to be created. At the same time every class in France was permeated through and through with the doctrine of the Sovereignty of the People, which had become an actual article of faith, that it was heresy to disbelieve, while the many members of the Assembly who had served in the American War of Independence naturally drew their inspiration from the Constitu-



tion of the United States, rather than from the old enemy, England, against which they had recently been in arms.

Yet the King himself in these early days, was both popular and respected and there still lingered some reverence for history and for the ancient Monarchy which for so many centuries had been the greatest and the proudest house in the world. The consequence of these mingled theories and sentiments was to establish a democratic republic, wherein all citizens were to be socially and politically equal; every hereditary title or office was to cease to exist; every post, representative, administrative, judicial or clerical was to be chosen by the People, in which the elective system was to be carried to, and beyond, its utmost limits. Upon this republican system of government was grafted an hereditary monarchy, a mere excrescence, grotesquely out of keeping with every other portion of the Constitution. The King, while he continued to exist in name, was deprived of all authority, all prestige, all patronage, all command even over his own troops, all power of pardon, all control over the Legislature which he could neither summon nor dismiss. He ceased to be the fountain of honour, or the fountain of justice.

Two fragments of the prerogative of a Constitutional sovereign were left to him, the power of formally proposing to the Assembly a declaration of war, and the power of sanctioning or vetoing the decrees of the Legislation. The sanction was absolute, the veto suspensive only. This right of "veto" had been the most hotly contested clause of the entire Constitution. It was bitterly opposed by the members of the Left of the Constituent Assembly, who after their manner let loose against it the whole pack of Parisian pamphleteers, journalists and street agitators. The ordinary inhabitants of Paris—the man in the street or in the shop—had never in his life heard the word and had not the remotest idea what it meant.



Some looked, or were taught to look, upon it as a new tax, others as a speculation to raise the price of sugar or corn; others as a plot to enable the Queen to send money to Austria, others as a law giving the King the power to hang whom he chose without trial. A contemporary reports the following conversation, the truth of which he vouches for as having been overheard by himself in the Palais Royal,

*Agitator.* "But do you know what the Veto is?"

*Elector of Paris.* "No."

*Agitator.* "Then I'll tell you. It's just this.

"Suppose you have your bowl full of soup and the King sends his orders to you to throw it out, however hungry you may be, you'll have to do it then and there. That is what the Veto is." Yet, all the labour spent on allowing the King a suspensory veto was worse than wasted. It gave an opportunity to the Legislative Assembly of passing two laws so harsh and threatening that the King had no option but to refuse his sanction, and it was this effort to use his veto that cost him his crown and his life. In the democratic press and among the populace of Paris, the King and Queen were seldom referred to during these years otherwise than as Veto and Madame Veto. Well might Burke say, "It is not in nature that, situated as the King of the French now is, he can respect himself or be respected by others." Louis XVI. himself in the advice which he gives to his Son in his Will expresses the same judgment in words of singular dignity and resignation, "A King cannot make himself respected and do all the good which is in his heart without a necessary degree of authority: without that his power is too limited to be of use, and as he cannot then inspire respect, he necessarily becomes more hurtful than useful."

If such were the limitations placed by the Constitution on the authority of the King, it is easy to imagine that the posi-

tion of his Ministers was a complete reversal of that which they had occupied hitherto.

For centuries, the highest ambition to which an able Frenchman could aspire was to be appointed one of the King's Ministry. The world hardly offered a more splendid position, or a wider field for display.

Many of the Ministry had been well deserving of the pomp and circumstance which surrounded them; a few had been great men in the best sense of the word; all had been attended by a train of respectful clients offering them counsel, presenting petitions or offering up before them the rich incense of flattery.

A great noble, a judge or a bishop was complimented and pleased when he received a smile or a friendly word from Monseigneur as he passed on his way to attend the Council. Such was the Ministry of the Old Regime. *Stat Magna nominis umbra.* The Minister of the Constitutional Regime bore much the same resemblance to Richelieu or to d'Argenson as Louis, King of the French, bore to Louis XIV., "*le Roi Soleil.*" "There was none so poor to do him reverence." In the debates on the Ministry in the Constituent Assembly, some had urged that the Ministry should be, like all our officials, elected, but the conclusive answer was that Ministry appointed by the People would be too highly esteemed. The King was therefore permitted to appoint and dismiss his Ministers, but his selection was limited to those who had not for two years been members of the National Assembly, a limitation which seriously narrowed the field from which he could choose, and often forced him to take Ministers whose names were unknown to himself or to the country, and who possessed neither the experience nor the consideration necessary to advise their Sovereign or face the Legislative Assembly. The Ministers, such as they usually were, were wholly deprived of authority; they

possessed no power to carry out their duties or to enforce their orders. The only way in which it was possible for them to carry on the business of the nation was to induce, persuade or compel the Committees of the Assembly which had in fact entirely absorbed the authority of the executive government; to act in concert with them or adopt the measures which they suggested. Above all, the Ministers were responsible to the Sovereign People, both for their own actions and for those of the King. And by responsibility, as they were constantly reminded by journalists and deputies, was meant Death. The King could do no more than dismiss them on a pension; the Assembly, could, at any moment, pass against them a Decree of Accusation on any one of sixteen charges, eight of which were capital offences. Obviously they depended not merely for their efficiency but for their personal security, on the good will of the Assembly. Under the Constituent Assembly their position had been sufficiently precarious, under the Legislative Assembly it became perilous to the last degree. It was the fixed policy of the Girondists and Jacobins to thwart the King's Ministry, to insult, denounce, threaten and impeach them; in short to get rid of them, one by one, until the King in despair should be driven to accept a Ministry from the Girondist party itself. To accomplish this purpose and to browbeat and silence the Constitutional members the Girondists and Jacobins added to the opposition the howls and screams of the galleries of the Assembly, which they packed with what Burke justly describes as "a mixed mob of ferocious men and of women lost to shame, who direct, control, applaud and explode them; domineering over them, with a strange mixture of servile petulance and proud, presumptuous authority." Bertrand tells of the efforts, occasionally successful, but in the main futile, which he made to counteract the Jacobin packing of the galleries, by employing a clique

of his own to applaud the Ministers and shout down the Girondists and Jacobins; but as the following extract from Étienne Dumont's *Memoirs* shows, the Constitutionalist and Ministerialists were totally unfitted to deal with such past masters in the art of political duplicity as their unscrupulous opponents. Dumont, it should be remembered, was much more in sympathy with the Republican than with the Constitutionalist party.

On the 10th March 1792, Monsieur de Lessart, Minister of Foreign Affairs, was impeached of High Treason and sent for trial before the High Court at Orleans.

Dumont writes: "I heard this Act of Impeachment, containing seventeen or eighteen counts, read in the Committee. When alone with Brissot and Clavière, I made some observations on the subject. I said that the counts were, many of them, one and the same thing, others were so vague that it was impossible to answer them; that they were calculated to excite undue prejudice and violent animosity against the accused; that many of them were contradictory; and that personal invectives — which ought to be carefully avoided in a criminal accusation, were freely employed.

"I was indignant at Brissot's reply. Laughing at my simplicity, he said in a tone of disgraceful levity, 'It is a party manœuvre. De Lessart must positively go to Orleans, otherwise the King, who is attached to him, will replace him in the Ministry. We must steal a march upon the Jacobins and this Act of Impeachment gives us the merit of doing what they would otherwise have done. I know that the counts are multiplied without necessity, but the object of this is to lengthen the proceedings. Garand de Coulon, who is at the head of the High Court of the Nation, is a strict observer of legal forms; he will methodically proceed to examine each separate count and six months will pass before de Lessart is able to clear him-

self. He will be acquitted of course; there is no evidence whatever against him. But we shall gain our object and prevent his returning to office.' 'Good God!' I exclaimed, confounded at such abominable principles, 'are you so plunged in party Machiavelism. Are you the man whom I have heard so often declaiming against subterfuges. Is it Brissot who is now bent on the persecution of an innocent man!' He was somewhat disconcerted and replied, 'But you don't understand how we are situated. De Lessart's administration would destroy us, and we are bound to get rid of him at any price. It is only a temporary measure. I know Garand's integrity and de Lessart will come to no harm.' The sequel is soon told. De Lessart was one of the unhappy victims of the Massacre at Versailles, 9 Sept. 1792. The King was forced to appoint Roland, Clavière and the rest on the 23d March, thus admitting the enemies' garrison into his dilapidated fortress. They were dismissed on the 12th June, but the King paid a bitter price for his release, in the two invasions of the Tuileries on the 20th June and the 10th August."

After the fall of the Monarchy, Roland, Clavière and the others returned to power. That their days, as well as Brissot's, were but few and evil was due to the stronger, more resolute, and more brutal power of the Jacobins, who used them as their tools to destroy the Monarchy and swept them into the abyss as soon as they had done the work designed for them. Several of the Ministers who held office under Louis XVI. during his last year were men of some note in their days; "*alors celebre*" to use Thiers' delightful phrase. Others are so obscure that they have passed from the memory of those best versed in the history of the Revolution.

In the notes at the end of these Memoirs I have given a few biographical details of each of them, which I hope will be sufficient to show what manner of men they were.

Three only of these Ministers play any great part in this final year of the Monarchy, Bertrand de Moleville himself, Narbonne and Dumouriez. Bertrand is his own best interpreter, but I have already given a few comments on the five months of his Ministry.

Narbonne and Dumouriez are too important to be relegated to a note, as is also La Fayette, who although not a Minister, claims our attention as a man who risked and lost all that was dear to him in his defence of the Constitution and of the Constitutional King.

Marie Jacques, Count de Narbonne Lara, was nominally at least, a member of an old Spanish family which bore for its motto "We do not descend from Kings, but Kings descend from us." In strange contradiction to this motto, the Count de Narbonne was universally accredited with being the son of Louis XV. It is certain that he bore a remarkable personal resemblance to that Monarch, though it is difficult to trace any mental or moral resemblance between the two. Whether his nationality was Spanish or French, he certainly possessed every French characteristic in a superior degree. High spirits, vanity, self-confidence, vivacity of speech and action, acute observation, charm of manner, possibly a certain indifference to truth, combined to make Narbonne acceptable to if not always trusted by all sorts and conditions of men. His youth was passed at Versailles, where his mother held the post of lady in waiting, first to the sister and afterwards to one of the daughters of Louis XV. After a sufficiently brilliant career as an officer of cavalry, artillery and infantry, Narbonne, who warmly espoused the Constitutional cause, was elected to the command of the National Guard of the Darby. In February 1791, when the King's Aunts emigrated, he acted with gallantry and address in enabling them to escape from France, and accompanied them to Rome. He owed his appointment as



Minister in great measure to Madame de Staël, with whom he had been on terms of intimacy since the beginning of the Revolution. Madame de Staël was now only at the beginning of her career of political intrigue. Narbonne was the first of a series of protégés which included several remarkable men, such as Talleyrand and Benjamin Constant. As Lamartine says, "To be the veiled fate of a great man was the only aim possible to her ambition" until she discovered her genius for literature. Narbonne was brilliant, active and courageous and she exalted him into a hero and a statesman. At the date when he was appointed Minister of War, the 7th Dec. 1791, he was in his thirty-seventh year. The fact of his being a prominent member of the Constitutional party, is sufficient to account for a cold reception from the King and Queen and for the prejudice against him so markedly shown by Bertrand de Moleville. "So Narbonne is Minister at last," wrote Marie Antoinette to Fersen, "what joy and glory for Madame de Staël, who can now dispose of armies. He is clean enough and he will be useful in salving the Constitutionals. He is the right sort of man for the Army of to-day. How glad I should be were I once again in a position to let these people know that I see through them thoroughly." Yet, Narbonne had at least a plan of his own, and was prepared to take the offensive; war was now imminent. This was the work of the Girondist party, and especially of Brissot, and it was becoming popular throughout the country. Those most opposed to war were, on the one hand, the King, and on the other the Jacobins, Robespierre, Danton, Marat, Dubois Crancé and the others. Brissot's object was only incidentally to attack Austria or Prussia. The real motive was to render Louis XVI. still more powerless and unpopular, and so to ensure his fall. Brissot, Guadet and Gensonné deliberately put forth the argument that the first great defeat (which they seemed to look forward



to with a perfectly light heart), would destroy the Monarchy offhand and establish the Republic of their dreams.

Narbonne from exactly opposite motives was equally in favour of the war; he held that even a single success, of which he seems to have been confident, would do more to re-establish the King's position than any amount of concessions or intrigues, while if a series of victories, of which he seems to have been tolerably sanguine, should be won by French skill and valour, Louis XVI. would be restored to a position more to be desired than that of any of his predecessors. The Girondists would be utterly routed, and Narbonne himself, to whom success was due, would rank as the great Minister of the Constitution.

Accordingly he accompanied Louis to the Assembly on the 14th December, where he declared that the King, in spite of his love of peace, was well prepared for war. That 150,000 excellent troops, well provided with arms and munitions, were already on the frontier, divided into three complete Army Corps, commanded by La Fayette, Rochambeau and Lückner. He then set out on a tour of inspection. Returning on the 11th January, he declared that the Northern Department was in the highest possible state of preparation; a statement which was cheered to the echo by the Assembly, and which wanted nothing but a semblance of truth to be altogether satisfactory. He persuaded the King to create Lückner and Rochambeau marshals of France, but was unable to obtain the same honour for La Fayette. The account of the difficulties and quarrels which arose between Narbonne, Bertrand de Moleville and the other Ministers (given in Chapter XVIII. of these Memoirs) is obviously true in the main, though naturally enough it is an *ex parte* statement, tinged, as is the account of Narbonne's interview with the Queen, with no small quantity of prejudice and jealousy. Bertrand, at least, was per-

mitted to resign with every possible expression of sympathy and kindness, while Narbonne was dismissed 9 March 1792, with a contempt which would have been overstrained had he been a recalcitrant footman.

He was succeeded after a brief interval by Dumouriez and the Girondist Ministry.

Narbonne went to the front and took part in some of the earlier engagements of the war. He was summoned by Louis, in the last days of his reign, to return to Paris, but he arrived only on the 6th or 7th August 1792.

A Decree of Accusation of High Treason was passed against him, and the Municipality placed him "*Hors la Loi*," but Madame de Staël concealed him in her own house and smuggled him in safety to England under the protection of a Hanoverian, Doctor Bollman. When the King's trial was imminent, Narbonne offered himself to the Convention as one of Louis' advocates, but as in the case of Bertrand de Moleville and others, permission was tersely refused.

After the war with France was declared Narbonne was ordered to leave England. He wandered through Germany and Switzerland until the year 1800, when he returned to France and solicited from the First Consul a return of his Commission. This request was not granted until the year 1809, when he was promoted to the rank of General of Divisions, in which capacity he went through the Russian Campaign of 1812-13. He was then sent as French Ambassador to Austria, when he strove in vain to come to terms with Metternich during the negotiations at Prague.

Speaking of the Mission, Napoleon, in one of his conversations at St. Helena said, "Until I sent M. de Narbonne we had been steadily duped by the Austrians. In less than a fortnight, M. de Narbonne had got to the bottom of everything, and Metternich was thoroughly put out of countenance by him.

The fatality of life! It is quite possible that I owe my ruin to Narbonne's success. His talent did me more harm than good. The Austrians, finding their duplicity discovered, threw off the mask and turned openly against me. Had Narbonne shown less penetration, the Austrians would have followed their usual languid, dilatory course. I should have gained all I wanted, more time, and who knows what chances might have come to aid me." The Count de Narbonne died, either from a fall from his horse or more probably from typhus fever at Torgau, on the 17th Nov. 1813, aged 58.

Charles François Dupérier Dumouriez, a member of an old family of Provence, before the Revolution had led an adventurous and wandering military and diplomatic career; he had been wounded in the Seven Years' War, had held a command in Corsica in 1768-1769 and had been despatched on secret missions to Poland and elsewhere. In 1788 he was promoted to the rank of *Maréchal de Camp*. The early days of the Revolution found him occupying the position of Military Governor of Cherbourg and superintending the fortification then being strengthened and enlarged. He stood for election to the States-General but failed to be elected. In 1790 he made the acquaintance of Mirabeau and La Fayette.

His relations with the latter were anything but cordial. La Fayette's vanity and aristocratic respectability made him scorn Dumouriez; a scorn which was returned with interest by Dumouriez, conscious of higher ability and wider views than the "Grandison-Cromwell" of the Revolution. At the same period he struck up something like a friendship with Gensonné, who introduced him to Madame Roland, Brissot and the other members of the party.

Dumouriez was in his fifty-third year when he was appointed Minister of Foreign Affairs, 17 March 1792. Although he entered the Ministry with Roland, Clavière and the

other Girondists, he had little or nothing in common with them. So far as internal politics were concerned he belonged to the Constitutional Royalists, with perhaps a stronger love of law and order, and a greater contempt for the will of the Sovereign People than was common among his colleagues. But for internal politics he cared little. His attitude towards the two famous decrees for the establishment of the Camp of the Fédérés and the banishment of "unsworn" priests was rather contemptuous than inimical. The Fédérés he thought he could easily get rid of, while the priests were nothing to him. They might be transported, imprisoned or killed for all he cared. The misunderstanding with Louis XVI. which led to his resignation was due to his inability to appreciate the horror with which Louis viewed the possibility of sanctioning the persecution of the clergy whom he believed to be absolutely in the right, and looked upon as martyrs to the cause from which he had apostatized in giving his consent to the Civil Constitution of the Clergy.

From the allusions in the extracts from Dumouriez's *Memoirs* which I give below, it must be concluded that Louis had for a moment unwillingly consented to Dumouriez's proposal that he should sign the two decrees and had shortly afterwards withdrawn his consent.

But it was on the foreign policy of France that Dumouriez's mind was focused. Like Narbonne he was strongly in favour of war, and like him he had a plan for its conduct, but Dumouriez's plan was more grandiose, statesmanlike and far reaching than the visions of the more sanguine, but slighter Narbonne. Dumouriez's experiences in the Seven Years' War had led him to despise the military power of Austria and to respect beyond measure the Prussian Army.

His plan was therefore to gain alliances, which should at least secure the benevolent neutrality of Prussia and the lesser

German states; to form a close friendship with England; to keep the various Italian principalities and kingdoms quiet and thus to isolate Austria and to fall upon her with all the force of the French Armies. He foresaw the possibilities of the wonderful campaign which he himself conducted in the Netherlands; but there were two points in his plan which experience proved to be erroneous. In the first place he did not realize the rapid decline which had taken place in the military prowess and skill of the Prussian Kingdom, and in the second, he did not foresee the dogged endurance and determination of the Austrian soldiery when they were under the command of competent Generals.

In any case Dumouriez's tenure of office was cut short before he could even begin to put his schemes into action.

He held the Ministry of Foreign Affairs from the 17th March to the 14th June 1792, and that of War, to which he was appointed after the dismissal of his fiendish colleagues, for five days, from the 13th to the 17th June.

The following extracts from Dumouriez's Memoirs are in themselves so interesting, and throw so much light on his own character, on those of the King and Queen, and on the position of France during the months of March, April and May, 1792, that I need make no apology for reproducing them here.

Dumouriez's account of the first conversation which he held with Louis XVI. on the 16 March 1792, runs thus:

*Dumouriez.* "Your order, Sire, to accept the post which I had before refused (that of Minister of Foreign Affairs) convinces me that your Majesty no longer entertains any prejudice against me."

*Louis.* "That is true."

*Dumouriez.* "Then, Sire, I shall devote myself entirely to your service, but the post of a Minister is no longer what it used to be. Without ceasing to be the zealous servant of your

Majesty, I am the servant of the Nation also. I shall always address you in the Language of Liberty and of the Constitution. Absorbed in the duties of my post I shall not have many opportunities of paying my court to you; and in this matter, I shall serve you best, by waiving all manner of ceremony. I shall transact all the business of my office with yourself or at the Council. Nearly all those entrusted by you with diplomatic functions are avowedly counter-revolutionists. I am obliged to propose to you several changes in the Diplomatic Service. I fear I may hurt your feelings in the choice of their successors. Some of them are unknown to you, the names of others will cause you displeasure. When your repugnance is strong and well founded, I shall obey you as my Master; but if your choice is merely suggested by those who surround you and is visibly calculated to harm you, in such a case I beg you either to follow my advice or to appoint a successor. Think, Sir, of the terrible danger which threatens your throne. You must be supported by means of the confidence of the Nation. This is a conquest yet to be achieved and it depends entirely upon yourself. I have this morning drawn up the drafts of four important despatches which I will present at the first Council. They do not resemble in any way the despatches of my predecessors; circumstances have changed all that. If my labours here are agreeable to you, I shall remain. If not, my camp equipage is always in readiness, in order that I may serve my country and yourself in the field. The Army is my real element and the object of my thoughts for these last thirty-six years."

*Louis.* "I like your frankness. I am sure that you are attached to me. I wish to carry out the Constitution and I hope that I shall be well pleased with your labours. A great many things have been said to me against you."

A few days later the King informed Dumouriez that the



Queen wished to have some private conversation with him. He found her alone, very much flushed, walking backwards and forwards with hasty steps.

She at length advanced towards him with a somewhat angry and majestic air and spoke as follows: "Sir, you are all powerful at this moment; but it is through the favour of the people who soon demolish their idols. Your situation depends upon your conduct. It is said that you possess great talents. You ought to know that neither the King nor I approve of all these new ideas or the Constitution. I tell you this frankly that you may choose what part you will play."

*Dumouriez.* "I am shocked at the painful confidence your Majesty has chosen to honour me with. I will not betray it. But if I am called upon to choose between the King and the Nation, I am the servant of my country. Permit me to represent to you that his Majesty's safety, your own, and that of your august children are closely bound up with the Constitution, to which is due also the re-establishment of the King's legitimate authority. I should be treating both him and you with injustice if I did not say this. Both of you are surrounded by enemies who are resolved to sacrifice you to their own private interests. If once we can get the Constitution into working order, far from being an occasion of embarrassment to the King, it will prove his safeguard and his fortune.

"It is all the more necessary, therefore, that he should concur in establishing it solidly and quickly."

The unfortunate Queen, shocked at finding her prejudices thus opposed, replied in a louder and more passionate tone, "It will never last. Therefore take care of yourself."

*Dumouriez.* "Madame, I am more than fifty years old; my life has been full of perils. When I entered the Ministry, I reflected that responsibility was not the greatest of my dangers."



“Alas!” exclaimed the Queen in a tone of deep melancholy, “How frightfully I am calumniated. You seem to believe me capable of having you assassinated.” As she spoke, the tears ran down her cheeks.

*Dumouriez.* “God forbid that I should do you such a cruel injustice. Your Majesty’s character is a great and noble one. You have given heroic proofs of it, which have insured my admiration and devotion. Believe me, Madame, when I say that I have no object or interest in deceiving you; for I abhor anarchy and crime as deeply as you do. Trust me. I possess at least experience, and I am in a better position to judge of events than you are. What is now going on is no momentary, popular explosion as you seem to think. It is the rising Revolution, almost unanimous, of a great nation against inveterate abuses. There are many and powerful factions fanning the flame, and many of those abound with fools, fanatics and ruffians. For myself, I look only at two objects in the Revolution, the King and the Nation. Whatever tends to separate them contributes to their mutual ruin. I am labouring to the utmost of my power to re-unite them, and in this work I ask your help. If you look on me only as an obstacle to your own plans, tell me so frankly and I will instantly place my resignation in the King’s hands and retire to some corner of my country, there to lament over its fate and on your own.”

On another occasion the Queen said to Dumouriez, “You find me quite prostrated. I no longer dare to go near the windows overlooking the garden. Yesterday evening I appeared at the window opposite the Court to breathe a little fresh air. One of the National Guard saw me and seized the opportunity to overwhelm me with the grossest insults, ending up with ‘You don’t know how glad I should be to have your head stuck on the top of my bayonet.’

“In this frightful garden you see in one place a man mounted

on a chair and declaming the most hideous calumnies against us; in another an officer or an abbé being dragged towards the fountains, and overwhelmed with blows and insults; and while all this is going on there are other people walking about or playing football quite unconcerned. What a place to live in, what a people." Dumouriez adds that he had nothing to reply, but could only answer by deep sighs.

On the 17th June 1792, Dumouriez had his last interview with Louis XVI., which he thus describes:

After examining and signing his accounts Louis said, "You are about then to join the Army and Lückner."

*Dumouriez.* "Yes, Sire, I am delighted to leave this frightful city. I have but one regret, and that is, the danger you are in."

*Louis.* "Yes, certainly," with a deep sigh.

*Dumouriez.* "Well, Sire, you cannot now suppose that I speak from any motive of self-interest. I am no longer a member of your Council and shall not in future have an opportunity of approaching you. I am speaking only from motives of fidelity and attachment to yourself, and therefore I dare once more to beseech you, out of love to your country, regard for your own safety and that of your Crown, in the name of your August Consort and of your children, not to persist in your fatal resolution of applying your Veto to the two decrees. Your refusal to do so will not benefit the country, while it will assuredly bring about your own immediate ruin."

*Louis.* "Speak no more on the subject. My mind is made up."

*Dumouriez.* "Ah, Sire! You told me the same thing in this very room, when, in the Queen's presence, you pledged your word that you would sanction them."

*Louis.* "I was in the wrong and I repent of what I said."

*Dumouriez.* "Sire, I shall never see you again. Pardon therefore my frankness. I am over fifty years old, and I have

had much experience. It was not then that you were wrong but now. Your conscience has been misled in the matter of the Decree against the Priests.

“You are being drawn into a Civil War. You have no resources and you must therefore succumb. History, while it pities you will at the same time lay on your shoulders the responsibility of having caused the misfortunes of France in consequence of your ill-timed scruples. You know what ridicule this very circumstance has thrown on the memory of James II. I dread more the danger to which you are exposed by your friends, than that you are likely to endure from your enemies.”

The King was at this moment seated at the table, where he had signed the accounts, Dumouriez was standing by his side, and the King took his hand and said to him with a very melancholy air “God is my witness, that I wish only for the happiness of France.”

*Dumouriez.* “I do not doubt it, Sire, but you owe an account to God, not only of the purity but also of the enlightened use you make of your intentions. You think that you will save religion. On the contrary, you will destroy it. The Priests will be massacred and your crown will be snatched from you. Perhaps you yourself, your Consort, your children —”

Unable to continue, Dumouriez kissed the King's hand. Both were in tears. After a few moments of profound silence, he continued, “Sire, if the French Nation knew you as well as I do, all our misfortunes would soon be at an end. You desire the happiness of France. To obtain it, it is necessary that you should sacrifice your own scruples.

“Those who are directing your conduct are blinded by their own interests and by the spirit of faction which misleads every one in times of revolution. You have never ceased to sacrifice yourself, to the Nation, ever since 1789. Continue to do

so and these commotions will die down, the Constitution will begin to work, the French will resume their original character, and the rest of your reign, founded on fixed and certain laws, will be happy and stable. Had there been a Constitution before your reign, you would never have experienced the long train of evils which now assail you. You are still the ambition of your understudy. Your soul is free from reproach. Take the advice of a man exempt from faction and prejudice; of one who has always tried to tell you the truth."

*Louis.* "I expect death and I pardon my murderers beforehand. I am indebted to you for your kindness. You have served me faithfully and I hold you in my esteem. If happier days should ever arrive, I will give you proofs of my regard." The King then hastily rose from the table and placed himself at a window at the other end of the room. Dumouriez slowly collected his papers, to give himself time to compose his countenance and prevent any of the members of the Court from observing his melancholy as he retired, as this long conference had certainly excited their curiosity.

The King, hearing him open the door, made steps forward and said to him very cordially, "Adieu. I wish you all manner of happiness."

The remainder of Dumouriez's career does not belong to the period of these Memoirs, and it presents too varied an interest to be given here. It must suffice to say that after winning the two battles, Valmy, on the 20th September, and Jemmapes on the 6 November 1792, the latter giving the whole of the Austrian Netherlands to France, Dumouriez became alarmed and discontented, to the last degree, with the proceedings of the Convention.

On the 30th March 1793, he recrossed the French frontier with the design of handing over the two fortified towns of Lille and Valenciennes to the Austrians and marching at the

head of his own Army to Paris to restore order and the Monarchy in the person either of the Dauphin, now titular King Louis XVIII., or of the young Duke of Chartres, Philip Égalité's eldest son. Meanwhile the Convention sent Beurnonville, Minister of War, and the representatives Lamarque, Camus, Blancal and Quinette to arrest the General. The delegates arrived at the Camp of Saint Amand, Dumouriez's camp, on the 2d April. They proceeded at once to his quarters and read to him the Decree of the Convention summoning him to Paris. "Do you suppose," replied the General, "that I should be such an idiot as to put myself in the clutches of the tigers who are decimating France." Instantly he summoned a troop of hussars and sent the Commissioners to the Austrian headquarters. The next day he harangued his troops, but failing to persuade them to follow him, he rode, with a small escort, to the Austrian lines. The greater part of the remainder of his life was spent in England. Recently the MS. of an elaborate system for the defence of England has been discovered and published under the title of "Dumouriez and the Defense of England against Napoleon, by J. Holland Rose and A. M. Broadley."

This book contains a full biography of Dumouriez, and I strongly recommend it to those who desire to study his adventurous life and his strangely complex and interesting character.

We come to the third and last of the trio of whom I have spoken, Marie Joseph Paul Roche Yves Gilbert de Motier, Marquis de la Fayette.

La Fayette had taken so great a part in drawing up the Constitution of 1791 that many writers, notably William Smyth, a high authority, refers to it invariably as the Constitution of La Fayette. At this period there can be no doubt that his whole heart and soul were set on its maintenance. He was

ready to make any sacrifice to preserve such semblance as the King yet possessed of authority, to hold back the rising tide of democracy, and to do all in his power to make the Constitution a workable scheme of government. It was not the least of the fatalities which combined to hurl the King and Queen into the abyss, that nothing could dispel the detestation with which they both regarded La Fayette.

The Queen was always a good hater, but perhaps in no other instance did Louis XVI. allow his resentment to overcome his mild and docile — too docile — nature.

There can, I think, be little doubt that the King himself as well as the Queen used every remnant of their influence to secure the election of Pétion to the Mayoralty of Paris instead of La Fayette in November 1791, a blunder which was literally fatal to themselves and their family.

Again when the King bestowed the rank of Marshal of France on Rochambeau and Lückner in March 1792, he refused to give the coveted baton to La Fayette, although his command was every whit as important as that of either of his colleagues.

The efforts which La Fayette made to aid the royal family, or to assist in their escape from Paris, met with the cold response of Louis XVI. The Queen in reply to Madame Elizabeth's urgent entreaties that she should trust in La Fayette, replied, "It is better to perish than to be saved by La Fayette and the Constitutionalists." She spoke quite as frankly to others. To one she said, "Mirabeau used to tell us that if war broke out, La Fayette would keep the King as a prisoner in his tent"; to another, "It would be too dreadful a misfortune to owe our lives to that man."

La Fayette's letter of the 16th June has been frequently described as wanting in tact and discretion. That it may have had some influence in hastening the downfall of the



Monarchy is possible; that it gave the last blow to his own waning popularity is certain. We are all too apt to judge contemporary occurrences by their results, which their authors could not by any human insight foresee. Tact and discretion are too frequently mere synonyms for cowardice. To my mind the letter is a noble and courageous document. Had La Fayette and his constitutionalist colleagues written and acted in such a spirit in July 1789, instead of tactfully and discreetly truckling to the Paris mob, the whole story of the Revolution might have been different. The letter is too long to be given in full. The following are the most important passages:

“The public welfare is in peril. The fate of France depends mainly on her Representatives; it is to them that the nation looks for salvation, but in giving itself a Constitution it has pointed out to them the only road by which they can travel towards safety.

“Your internal and your external enemies must both be destroyed. But you will never have the power to destroy them unless you act justly and in accordance with the Constitution. Look around you; can you deny that a faction—and to avoid any possibility of mistake, I will say at once the Jacobin faction—has caused all these miseries. It is to this faction solely that I attribute them. Organized as if they formed a separate nation, blindly directed by a few ambitious leaders, the party forms a body apart from the rest of the people, whose powers it usurps by overawing its representatives and its executive officers. It is here, among the Jacobins, that loyalty to the Law is stigmatized as aristocracy, and violation of it, patriotism. Here the assassins of Desilles are received in triumph and the armies of a Jourdan Coup-tête are panegyricized, . . . Let the reign of the Clubs, annihilated by your prowess, give place to the reign of the law; their



usurpation, to the firm and independent exercise of the Constitutional Authorities; their maxims of anarchy, to the true principles of liberty; their frantic fury to the magnanimous courage of a Nation which recognizes its own rights and knows how to defend them."

The storm of debate which followed the reading of this letter may be imagined. After raging for some hours, an ingenious method of breaking it was agreed upon. The letter was referred to the Committee of Twelve (which contained a Jacobin majority) for the purpose of ascertaining whether La Fayette's signature were genuine.

Needless to say it never emerged from the hands of the Committee and was consequently neither printed nor circulated throughout the Departments as La Fayette had designed. Only two days after the receipt of this letter by the Legislative Assembly, came the invasion of the Tuileries by the mob, 20th June 1792.

La Fayette determined to try once more the former magic of his presence. He left the Army, came to Paris and appeared before the Legislative Assembly to declare the genuineness of his signature and to denounce the outrage of the 20th June. He was answered by Guadet, who in the course of an eloquent oration uttered these words: "Why is the General here? Is our country out of danger; is the enemy vanquished? No, the country is not sound; the situation remains unchanged, and yet the General in command of one of our most important Armies is here, in Paris." Baffled in the Assembly, La Fayette turned to the National Guard, his own creation, his children as he loved to call them, hitherto his enthusiastic supporters. He ordered a review of the first division of the National Guard to take place the next morning, when the King was to pass along the line and La Fayette was to address the troops. But the Mayor Pétion was informed of this plan,

the King declined to attend it and the review did not take place. It is said, though the statement is hardly credible, that it was Marie Antoinette who informed Pétion; it is quite probable that she dissuaded the King from taking part in it. She seems indeed to have dreaded her old enemies, La Fayette and the Constitutionals, more than her new ones, the Jacobins.

As a last resource, La Fayette then summoned all the National Guards whom he could still influence to meet at his house. Arrangements were then made for a second meeting the next day in the Champs Elysées, and it was agreed that if three hundred guards mustered on that occasion, La Fayette should lead them to suppress the Jacobin Club. Scarcely thirty men had the courage to appear. The game was up and La Fayette in despair returned to his Army, leaving his effigy to be burnt by every mob which gathered in Paris, and the Clubs and Journals to denounce "Fayettisme" as the most dangerous form of treason, and "Fayettiste" as worthy only of the guillotine. The next news that reached him told of the downfall of the constitutional monarchy and the proclamation of the Republic.

He arrested the Commissioners sent by the Assembly to administer the new oath, and shut them up in the citadel of Sedan; at the same time he took what steps he could to raise the Northern Departments against the Assembly and to test the loyalty of his own Army. The Assembly promptly decreed his arrest and sent fresh Commissioners to bring him to Paris. Accompanied by three of his former colleagues of the Constituent Assembly, Bureaux de Puzy, Alexandre Lameth and Latour Maubourg, and a portion of his Staff he rode across the French frontier on the night of the 19th, 20th August, intending to pass through Holland and return to the United States. He was however made prisoner by the Aus-

trians, and after much ill-usage, imprisoned successively at Glatz, Neiss and Olmutz, whence he did not emerge until the 19th September 1797, when he was released after the treaty of Campo Formio, in consequence of the insistence of Napoleon Bonaparte, who had been commissioned by the Directory to demand, as one of the terms of the Treaty, the freedom of La Fayette and his companions in captivity.

This seizure and continued imprisonment was contrary to all the laws of war, and forms a dark blot on the Austrian Government. At the same time it is well to remember that had he fallen into the hands of his own countrymen, his career would have been promptly cut short by the guillotine, while his unjust imprisonment left him free to oppose each successive government and to play his part of a Grandison-Cromwell (the epithet is Mirabeau's) during the remainder of his long, honourable, but always ineffective and wrong-headed career. Of him more truly than of any of the Bourbons it may be said that he "remembered nothing and forgot nothing." He remained the Constitutionalist member of the left centre of the Constituent Assembly up to the day of his death, at the age of 77, on the 19th May 1834. I dare not assert that either Narbonne, Dumouriez, La Fayette, or the Constitutionals, taken as a whole, could have saved the King and Queen. From the time when the Legislative Assembly met and Pétion was elected Mayor of Paris (October and November 1791) I believe the Monarchy to have been doomed. But that is to judge by the course of events which is known to us, but of which contemporaries knew nothing.

That the King, and still more the Queen, whose spirit was higher and more buoyant, erred and erred fatally in throwing away their last chance by rejecting the help of the Constitutional leaders, is obvious. They were, in fact, waiting for the intervention of the Austrians and Prussians, who



*Lu. Fayolle*



could, as they hoped, restore their freedom, make life tolerable to them and enable them to establish a limited Monarchy, which was all that Louis XVI. desired. No summing up of the case for the Crown can be better expressed than by Dr. William Smyth: "Those may blame them who have not known what misfortune is; what it is to seem wedded to calamity; what it is to be apparently under the influence of some malignant planet that marks us out from all our fellow-mortals for failure and for ruin; what it is to feel how little comfort and support can be drawn, after the event, from reflecting on being told by others, how great have been our mistakes or how evident our want of judgment."

Here I must conclude, leaving it to Bertrand de Moleville to relate the events of the years 1791-92, fatal alike to the King and Queen and to those faithful subjects who served him to their utmost.

Throughout his Memoirs Bertrand frequently assumes that his readers are acquainted with the details of the events which he describes. These details were fresh in the memory of contemporaries but are now, after the lapse of nearly one hundred and twenty years, more or less forgotten.

I have therefore added notes to each volume, giving the briefest possible summary of such days as the 20th June; the 10th August and the 2nd and 3rd September 1792. I have also included in these notes explanations of institutions and terms now obsolete or extinct, such as the Parlements, the Intendants and the like. Finally I have given short biographical notices of the principal persons mentioned by Bertrand. These notes are intended only for those who have not made a special study of the French Revolution. I hope that they may serve as a modest but useful commentary on Bertrand's own narratives.

Two editions of these Memoirs have appeared. The first

consisting of a French and English version, each in three volumes, published simultaneously by Strahan and Cadell, London, 1797. The second, in French only, by Michaud, Paris, 1816.

Strange to say, although the *Memoirs of Bertrand* are quoted by every subsequent writer, great or small, who has dealt with the history of the period, no version of them has since been produced in France or in England, although the two early editions, 1797 and 1816, have become exceedingly rare and difficult to obtain.

After some hesitation I have come to the conclusion that the best text is that of the English edition of 1797. In some respects the Paris issue of 1816 is fuller, but it omits a good many of the most interesting passages and produces the general effect of being more laboured and less spontaneous than the earlier version. I have taken very few liberties with the text of this 1797 edition. In a few cases I have added proper names which are omitted in the earlier, and inserted in the later issue.

I have also modernized the spelling, especially in the case of proper and place names. But in the main, I have made as few alterations as possible, since it seems to me that the old-fashioned or even archaic sentences which occur from time to time add to the interest, by lending an actuality which would be missing in a translation of the work into the English of to-day.



## EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION.

### LIST OF BOOKS WRITTEN OR EDITED BY BERTRAND DE MOLEVILLE.

(All books and pamphlets written or edited by Bertrand are included in this list, with the exception of his official reports and speeches, during the period when he was Minister of Marine, 1791-92.)

1. Lettre a l'auteur (Count Condorcet) de l'Éloge du Chancelier de l'Hôpital, contenant des recherches intéressants sur l'histoire du règne de Henri II. (Anonymous.) (La Haye, et Paris, 1778.)
2. Observations adressées à l'Assemblée des Notables, sur la composition des États Généraux et sur la forme la plus régulière de les convoier. (Anonymous.) (Paris, 1788.)
3. Lettre de M. Bertrand de Moleville au Président de la Convention nationale (on his emigration) 6 November 1792. (London, 1792.)
4. Seconde Lettre au Président de la Convention nationale. (On the charges brought against Louis XVI.) 16 November 1792.
5. Dénonciation de prévarications commises dans le procès de Louis XVI., adressée à la Convention nationale par M. Bertrand de Moleville, 8 Janvier 1793. Londrès, et réimprimé à Paris, 1793.
6. Lettres de M. Bertrand de Moleville a M. le Président de la Convention nationale sur les poursuites dirigées contre M. Bertrand et MM. Vernier et Deflahaut, 11 Février 1793. (London, 1793.)

7. *Seconde Lettre et pièces justificatives sur les poursuites dirigées contre M. Bertrand et M. Deflahaut.* 15 Février 1793. (London, 1793.)
8. *Mémoires secrets pour servir à l'histoire de la dernière année du règne de Louis XVI., Roi de France.* 3 vol. London 1797.
9. *Private Memoirs relative to the last year of the Reign of Lewis the Sixteenth, Late King of France.* 3 vol. London, 1797.

The English and French editions of this work were issued simultaneously. A later edition was published differing considerably from the edition of 1797 under the title:

10. *Mémoires particuliers pour servir à l'histoire de Louis XVI.* 2 vol. (Paris, 1816.)
11. *Annals of the French Revolution; or a chronological account of its principal events; with a variety of Anecdotes and Characters hitherto unpublished.* Translated by R. C. Dallas, Esq., from the original manuscript of the Author, which has never been published. 4 vols. covering the period from August 1788 to the end of September 1791. (London, 1800.)
12. *Annals of the French Revolution.* The second edition. (This is not a second edition but a second part, containing the history from October 1792 to January 1793. The vols. are numbered 5 to 9.) 5 vols. (London, 1809.)
13. *Correspondence between M. Bertrand de Moleville and the Hon. Charles James Fox upon his quotation of the "Annals of the French Revolution" in the debate in the House of Commons, on the 3rd of February 1800.* With a translation by R. C. Dallas. (London, 1800). A second issue was published a few weeks after the first.
14. *The Costume of the Hereditary States of the House of*

Austria, in fifty coloured engravings. With descriptions and an introduction (in French) by M. Bertrand de Moleville. Translated by R. C. Dallas. (The text both in French and English.) (London, 1804.)

15. A Refutation of the libel on the Memory of the late King of France, published by Helen Maria Williams, under the title of Political and Confidential Correspondence of Lewis the Sixteenth. Translated from the original manuscript by R. C. Dallas.
16. Histoire de la Revolution de France, pendant les dernières années du règne de Louis XVI. Première partie, comprenant les années 1788-1791 jusqu'à la fin de l'Assemblée Constituante. Deuxième partie, comprenant les années 1791-1793 jusqu'à la mort de Louis XVI. Troisième partie, comprenant les années 1794-1799, jusqu'à l'avènement du Gouvernement consulaire. 14 vol. (Paris, 1801-1803.)

The whole book was published under the name of Bertrand de Moleville, but the third part (consisting of Vols. XI-XIV) was disclaimed by him, and is the work of Delisle de Sales. Mémoires du Comte de Grammont. Nouvelle édition, par A. F. de Bertrand de Moleville. 2 vol. (London, 1811.)

17. A Chronological Abridgment of the History of Great Britain from the first invasion of the Romans to the year 1763. 4 vols. (London, 1812.)
18. An abridged edition of this work in one volume with the same title was published in London, 1813.
19. Either the original French text, or a retranslation into French was published in 1815, under the title "Histoire d'Angleterre depuis la première invasion des Romains jusqu'à la paix de 1763." 6 vols. (Paris, 1815.)

## EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION.

### CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE OF EVENTS FROM THE 21 JUNE 1791 TO THE 10 AUGUST 1792.

1791. 21 June	Flight of the Royal Family to Varennes.
25 June	Return of the Royal Family to Paris.
27-28 June	The three Deputies appointed to receive the depositions of the King and Queen, attend at the Tuileries.
13 July	Decree suspending the King until he accepts the Constitution.
17 July	Meeting in the Champ de Mars to demand the dethronement of the King. The "Massacre" of the Champ de Mars.
30 July	Decree suppressing Decorations and Orders of Knighthood.
5 Aug.	Completion of the Constitution reported to the Assembly. Order for its revision.
22 Aug.	Rising of the Slaves in San Domingo and Massacre of Planters and others.
25 Aug. to 4 Sept.	Elections to the Legislative Assembly take place.
27 Aug.	Declaration of the Emperor and King of Prussia signed at Pilnitz.
3 Sept.	The Constitution passed by the Assembly.
14 Sept.	The King takes the Oath of Fidelity to the Constitution.
14 Sept.	Annexation of Avignon and the Comté Venaissin to France.
18 Sept.	Fêtes throughout France in honour of the Constitution.

1791. 30 Sept. The Constituent Assembly dissolved.
- 1 Oct. The Legislative Assembly meets.
- 4 Oct. Bertrand de Moleville appointed to the Ministry of Marine. (Resigns 15 March 1792.)
- 5 Oct. Decree ordering the disuse of the terms Sire and Majesty, and directing that the King's chair shall be on the same level as that of the President. (This decree was repealed on the following day.)
- 16 Oct. Letter of the King to his brothers, the Counts Provence and Artois, ordering them to return to France. (In reply the princes state that they will return as soon as they are satisfied that the King is in enjoyment of his liberty.)
- 28 Oct. Two Decrees against the Émigrés passed (1) Ordering the Count de Provence to return within two months under pain of losing his right to act as Regent, (2) Declaring that Frenchmen who have formed themselves into armed bodies in foreign countries are guilty of Treason, and that those who remain after the 1st January 1792, shall be punishable by death.
- 31 Oct. Massacres of more than sixty persons by mobs under the leadership of Jourdan "Coup-tête."
- 12 Nov. The King sanctions the decree of the 28 Oct. relating to the Count de Provence but vetoes the second decree against the Émigrés.

1791. 12 Nov. The King issues a Proclamation calling on the Émigrés to return to France.
- 14 Nov. Pétion elected Mayor of Paris.
- 16 Nov. Duportail appointed to the Ministry of War. (Resigned 2 Dec. 1791.)
- 27 Nov. Resignation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs by Montmorin. (Appointed 15 July 1789.)
- 28-29 Nov. Appointment of de Lessart to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and of Cahier de Gerville to that of the Interior. (De Lessart resigned 17 March, and Gerville 22 March 1792.)
- 29 Nov. Decree withdrawing pensions from "unsworn" priests; ordering them to be placed under the surveillance of the Departmental Authorities and to be banished should any religious troubles arise.
- 5 Dec. The Department of the Seine petitions the King to veto the Decree of the 29 Nov. against the clergy.
- 6 Dec. Narbonne appointed to the Ministry of War. (Dismissed 10 March 1792.)
- 14 Dec. The King notifies to the Assembly in person, the Declaration which he has made to foreign Sovereigns that those who protect armed Émigrés after the 1st January 1792, will be held to be at war with France.
- 19 Dec. He vetoes the Decree of the 29th Nov. against the "unsworn" priests.
- 21 Dec. Narbonne sets out on his Military Inspection of the Northern Departments.

1792. 23-24 Jan. First pillage of grocers' shops by the Paris mobs.
- 9 Feb. Decree ordering the sequestration of the property of Émigrés.
- 1 March Death of the Emperor Leopold II. and succession of his son, Francis II.
- 3 March Murder of Simoneau, Mayor of Étampes.
- 10 March De Grave appointed to the Ministry of War in succession to Narbonne, dismissed. (Resigned 8 May 1792.)
- 10 March Decree of Accusation of Treason pressed against M. De Lessart, who is sent for trial before the High Court at Orleans.
- 15 March Lacoste appointed to the Ministry of Marine. (Resigned 21 July 1792.)
- 17 March Dumouriez appointed to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. (Transferred to Ministry of War 13 June; resigned 17 June 1792.)
- 23 March Clavière appointed to the Ministry of Finances and Roland to the Ministry of the Interior. (Both were dismissed 13 June 1792.)
- 30 March Decree appropriating the property of the Émigrés to defray the expenses of the war.
- 6 April Decree forbidding ecclesiastics to wear a distinctive costume.
- 13 April Duranthon appointed to the Ministry of Justice. (Resigned 3 July, 1792.)
- 15 April Fête in honour of the mutinous soldiers of the Chateau-Vieux Regiment.



1792. 20 April Declaration of War against Austria.
- 28 April Sortie of the French from Lille. The troops seized with panic. Murder of General T. Dillon.
- 30 April Attack of the French under General Biron on Mons. Troops again seized with panic, and abandon the camp.
- 9 May Servan appointed to the Ministry of War. (Dismissed 13 June.)
- 16 May La Fayette's Letter to the General Assembly.
- 27 May Decree ordering that "unsworn" priests should be banished at the request of twenty citizens of a Canton.
- 29 May Decree disbanding the King's Constitutional Guard and sending the Duke de Brissac to be tried by the High Court at Orleans.
- 1 June Fête in honour of Simoneau, Mayor of Étampes.
- 8 June Decree ordering the formation of a Camp of twenty-thousand "Fédérés" under the walls of Paris.
- 10 June "The petition of eight thousand" against the Camp of the "Fédérés."
- 13 June Dumouriez transferred to the Ministry of War.
- 13-14 June Beaulieu appointed to the Ministry of Finance. Mourgues to that of the Interior; and Naillac to that of Foreign Affairs. Mourgues and Naillac resigned on the 17th and 18th June; Beaulieu on the 28 July 1792.

1792. 18-19 June The King appoints "La Fayette" Ministry, consisting of Chamboras, Lajard, Terrier du Monciel, Beaulieu and Dejoby.
- 19 June The King vetoes the decrees of the 27 May, against the Clergy, and of the 8th June on the Camp of the Fédérés.
- 20 June Invasion of the Tuileries by the Paris mob.
- 28 June La Fayette appears at the bar of the Assembly to demand the prosecution of the author of the invasion of the Tuileries on June 20th.
- 30 June Marshal Lückner evacuates Ypres, Mencia and Courtrai.
- 1 July "Petition of the Twenty Thousand" demanding the prosecution of the authors of the Invasion of the Tuileries on June 20th.
- 6 July The Department of the Seine orders the dismissal of Pétion from the Mayoralty. The King sanctions the order, but the Legislative Assembly revokes it on the 13th July.
- 7 July The members of the Legislative Assembly fall on each others' necks, and greet the King with cries of "Vive le Roi." This hysterical exhibition is known as the "Kisses of Lamouret," after Lamouret, Constitutional Bishop of Lyons.
- 10 July All the Ministry appointed on the 18, 19 June 1792 resign on the ground that they are powerless to resist Anarchy.
- 11 July The decree of "The Country in danger" passed.

1792. 14 July Third celebration of the Fête of the Federation. The King hissed and only saved from violence by the National Guard. Cries are raised of "Long live Pétion" and "Pétion or Death."
- 21-23 July Appointment of Dubouchaye to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Champion de Ville-neuve to the Ministry of Interior and d'Abancourt to the Ministry of War. (All three were superseded after the 10th August.)
- 26 July Assembly decree that a portion of the Gardens of the Tuileries known as the "Terrasse des Feuillants" form part of their "Enceinte" and throw them open.
- 30 July Arrival of the main body of the Marseillais, 500 strong.
- 1 Aug. Bigot de Saint Croix to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and of Leroux de La-ville to the Ministry of Finance. (Both were superseded after the 10 August.)
- 10 Aug. The second Invasion of the Tuileries. At 10 a. m. the King and Royal Family take refuge in the Assembly. They remain there until the 13 August.
- 11 Aug. Decree of the Assembly ordering that a Convention shall be summoned; that the King shall be suspended and lodged with his family in the Luxembourg and that a Governor shall be appointed for the Dauphin.
- 12 Aug. The Decree as to the custody of the King and Royal Family is repealed, and they

1792. 13 Aug.

are placed in the custody of the Municipality.

The King and Royal Family taken by the orders of the Municipality to the Luxembourg.



## INTRODUCTION.

BY BERTRAND DE MOLEVILLE.

WHILE I was employed in arranging the various notes and observations which I had made on those incidents of the French Revolution, in which I myself was principally concerned, I had no intention that the following Memoirs should be published during my lifetime. My chief view, in this work, was to do justice to the character of Louis XVI.; to detect the calumnies invented by the most wicked of men to justify the dethroning, imprisoning, and murdering the most virtuous of Kings. Placed in situations that afforded me opportunities of knowing the principles on which his Majesty acted, and the motives of his conduct at a most important crisis, I consider myself as a necessary witness in the great cause between Louis XVI. and his murderers, of which posterity is to judge.

My first design was, that these Memoirs, containing my personal testimony respecting all the facts within my knowledge, should be reserved for the impartial judgment of future ages; but it has been suggested to me, that the facts would derive a greater degree of authenticity from their being submitted to the contradiction of all contemporaries, who think themselves interested in refuting them; that the truth of these Memoirs may be brought to the test of that cross-examination, I have been prevailed on not to defer their publication any longer.

The honour of the French nation loudly demands that all the manœuvres, intrigues, and conspiracies that brought on



the present Revolution should be laid open; that all the facts should be known; that the real criminals should be branded for the justification of the innocent; that the authors of such general calamity and of so many atrocities may not be confounded with their numerous victims. Truth and justice shall trace the line which ought to distinguish and separate the errors which produced and favoured the Revolution, from the horrible crimes which disgraced it. This separation will exhibit on one side but a small number of men, the greatest portion and the most blood-thirsty of the guilty having already been overtaken by the Divine vengeance. On the other side will appear the whole French nation, composed of different parties, now more divided by their recollections than by their opinions; for the greater part, enlightened by time and by misfortune, detest those whose exaggerations led them astray; they are now more estranged by the hatred which they suppose in each other, than by that which they really feel; all are harassed by, and disgusted with the Revolution; all feel the necessity of a general union to obtain the establishment of that order and tranquillity for which they all sigh, and are willing to purchase by reciprocal sacrifices, and by the oblivion of all injuries and resentments. How can they refuse to forget and forgive the consequences of errors, into which almost every individual of the French nation has been led; for there is hardly one who did not wish for some change in the Government, at a period when the minds of men were in such a state of exaltation, that the ancient edifice of the Constitution was in danger of being totally overturned, if at all attacked? To vows imprudently made, to the chimerical and ambitious hopes of hot-headed and factious men; to an inconsiderate desire for a new order of things, was owing that general fermentation, of which a class of men, as artful as

perfidious, took advantage, to throw all into confusion. Since then every one has, in some way or other, helped on the Revolution, this ought to produce a reciprocal forgiveness, as universal as the errors from which it originated — I say the errors, not the crimes; for I am far from thinking that certain execrable deeds, objects of everlasting shame and grief to the French nation, will ever be forgiven by it. But fortunately the greatest criminals, the chiefs of the Regicide faction, no longer exist; and among those of their accomplices, who have the misfortune to be still alive, how few there are who were not driven by threats and by terror, rather than prompted by native wickedness, and who would not expiate the crime of their cowardice, if remorse could expiate such a crime.

It is known that the Deputy Vergniaud<sup>1</sup> seemed in despair,

<sup>1</sup> Pierre Victorien Vergniaud, an advocate of Bordeaux, owed his early education to Turgot, who, when Intendant of the Limousin, gave him a bursarship at the College du Plessis, Paris. He was admitted as an Advocate in 1781 and soon obtained a large practice at the bar. In 1790 he made a speech of great power and eloquence on Mirabeau, which probably gained him his seat in the Legislative Assembly. On his arrival in Paris he at once joined the Jacobin Club and soon became recognized as the finest orator in the Legislative Assembly.

Indeed there are many who hold him to be the greatest speaker produced by the Revolution. The reader of to-day, though occasionally wearied by the constant classical allusions common to all the orators of the period, can hardly read without emotion, the great speeches of Vergniaud, who when strongly moved, rises to the highest flow of sonorous, lofty and impassioned eloquence. In his case, as in that of most of the Girondists, it is difficult to say exactly what his immediate aim was. His ideal form of Government was a Republic, but he often trod with strangely uncertain steps towards it. Thus in July 1792, Vergniaud immediately after an attack upon the King himself, as envenomed as it was powerful, joined with Guadet and Gensonné in secret negotiations with Louis XVI. engaging to save his throne and person if the King would consent to restore the Girondist ex-Ministers Roland, Clavière and Servan. The tenth of Au-

and passed the whole night immediately after the King's condemnation in tears; and it is probable that the same night was as dreadful to all his colleagues, if we except a small number of consummate villains, who in their absurd ferocity declared in the National Assembly that Louis XVI. deserved death for the single crime of being a King, and condemned him merely because they wished to destroy royalty.

In spite of the fermentation, and almost madness, that agitated France after the 10th of August and 3d of September 1792, I am convinced, that if the National Convention had been able to thrust from among them a few sanguinary monsters,—the Robespierres, the Marats, the Cuthons, the St. Justs, the Collot d'Herbois', the Barrères, etc.—the prevailing sentiment in the Assembly respecting the King, would have been a sentiment of veneration for his virtues, and compassion for his misfortunes; and had it not been repressed by terror from the assassins who surrounded them, what follows would have been the language, as, I am persuaded, it *gust*, followed by the September Massacres, rapidly taught Vergniaud and his colleagues that the Republic which was inevitable would prove the exact reverse of the orderly classical government of which they dreamed.

Elected at the head of the list of Representatives of the Department of the Gironde in the Convention, he became the recognised leader of that party, and was enthusiastically supported in his attacks upon Danton, Marat and the Municipality of Paris. His conduct during the trial of Louis XVI. produced a deep and evil influence on his colleagues and gave to many of them who were wavering in their intentions, an excuse to take the path of immediate safety by voting for the King's execution. Vergniaud first voted for the appeal to the Nation; when that appeal was rejected he found himself obliged to vote directly for or against the sentence of death. He was at the time President of the Convention. Descending from the President's chair and mounting the Tribune he spoke thus: "I have voted in favour of submitting the judgment of the Convention to the sanction of the People.

"In my opinion considerations of the highest political value **make** this submission the obvious duty of the Convention.

expresses the feelings of that Assembly: "The monarchy is overthrown, but not by us; it is the effect of that Constitution which, by removing from the throne all strength and all support, rendered its fall inevitable. The public voice, on which all our power depends, now loudly calls for a new order of things: the people, declared free and sovereign, wish to begin the exercise of their sovereignty: the people call for a republic, and as the call is general, it is our duty to acquiesce, even if their desire were more unreasonable; and their preference of a republican form of government seems the less equivocal, that it has been manifested during the reign of one of the mildest Monarchs, one so worthy of the throne, and so formed for inspiring the people with a love of royalty. But we will impose no hardship that is not indispensably connected with our submission to the will of the nation; we will show ourselves worthy of being the Representatives of France by our respect for your virtues and your misfortunes, and by our eagerness to record your benevolence, and by doing all

"But the Convention has decided otherwise and I obey its decision with a clear conscience.

"We have now to decide upon the punishment which is to be inflicted upon Louis. I declared yesterday that I held him to be guilty of conspiracy against the freedom and welfare of the Nation. I cannot to-day hesitate as to his punishment. It is the Law which speaks for death." Proscribed, with twenty-one other Gironds on the 31st May and 2nd June, Vergniaud made no attempt to escape. Before the Revolutionary Tribunal he uttered the famous epigram: "The Revolution is like Saturn; it devours its own children." Refusing to use a poison which Condorcet had given him, he mounted the scaffold with his colleagues on the 31st October 1793 and was guillotined at the age of 40. I have not met elsewhere with the statement that Vergniaud passed the night after the King's condemnation in tears; but it is by no means improbable, for he was a man not only of greater intellect and deeper thought than the majority of his colleagues, but of a kindlier and more gentle disposition; his defects were indolence and the want of active courage. In more peaceful times he might have risen to greatness, but he was unfitted for the sound and fury in the midst of which his lot was cast.

justice to your good intentions. Do you yourself choose your future abode, and wherever you go be assured, that you will be accompanied by our sympathy, our love, and our gratitude; and that the republic will ever consider itself as bound by the most sacred ties to secure to you and your family a most honourable retreat. Allow us calmly to make the most dangerous perhaps, but certainly the most important, experiment that a nation can make; whatever the event may be, it will decide the great problem respecting the sovereignty of the people, the bounds of political liberty, and whether a steady republican government can be established in a great empire; we shall at least have the glory of having devoted ourselves for the purpose of giving a great and useful example or lesson to mankind. Advise the foreign States, your allies, not to intermeddle with our affairs; for if they force us into a war, the whole French nation will unite to punish them, and to show the world that numerous armies, composed of men inspired with the enthusiasm of liberty, and armed in defence of their rights, are invincible. Above all, advise the royalists not to show themselves our enemies; we bear no ill-will to them; we can never hate those who are your sincere friends; do not let them prolong, by fruitless efforts, a contest, the issue of which interests them as much as us. If the French people are really happier under a republican government, than they were under monarchy, your well-known love for them convinces us that their happiness, to a mind benevolent and disinterested as yours, would prove a compensation for your own sacrifices. Such was the sentiment that Louis XVI. expressed to the Deputy Manuel, when he announced to him in the Temple, that the National Assembly had decreed a Republic. But on the other hand, if our hopes should be frustrated; if it shall be demonstrated by the result of the present trial, that monarchy, prudently limited, is the happiest form of govern-

ment, and the only one suitable to France, we will be glad to return to our beloved monarch; our hands will rebuild his throne on so firm a foundation, that it shall never more be shaken. We will invest you with a power, whose limits shall be no restraint on the authority of a good King."

Such, I say, would have been the determination of the great majority of the National Assembly after the 10th of August 1792, if they had not been under the influence of terror; if the monsters above enumerated had never existed; and if, as Grangeneuve<sup>2</sup> declared in the Assembly on the 16th

<sup>2</sup> Jean Antoine Grangeneuve, an Advocate of Bordeaux, was one of the deputies of the Department of the Gironde to the Legislative Assembly.

In the Legislative Assembly, he took a violent part against Louis XVI. At the first sitting he proposed that the terms Majesty and Sire should be henceforth abolished. He was also the first to wear the red Phrygian "Cap of Liberty" in the Assembly. But time and experience modified his democratic ardour. The words to which Bertrand alludes, which were spoken in giving judgment on the King, were: "It cannot be denied that every device and influence have been used to wring from the National Convention, a sentence of death.

"In such circumstances I can, less than ever, accept or exercise the sovereign power in criminal cases, which is attributed to us. I can only act as one charged to defend the public interests. If it could be proved to me that nothing but the death of Louis could make the Republic free and prosperous, I would vote for his death, but it is on the contrary perfectly clear to me that this event can only produce the greatest evils and no advantages whatever.

"There is no instance in history where the liberty of a Nation has depended on the death of any one individual. Liberty depends on public opinion and on the will to be Free. I therefore refuse to vote for the death of Louis XVI." I have quoted Grangeneuve's speech somewhat fully, because it is a pleasure to read the words of a brave man. His sentiments were those of the whole Girondist party, but hardly any other members dared to speak them openly in that terror-stricken hall, with the howling mob waiting to greet every word with shrieks of applause or savage fury, and with the recollection of the September Massacres still ringing through the brain of each speaker as he mounted the Tribune. Naturally, there was no escape, save by happy accident, for such a man as Grangeneuve.



of January 1793, every means that could operate on the minds of men had not been put in force, to draw from them individually the sentence of condemnation against the King, which, after all, was obtained by a very small majority.

If the measure above indicated, as moderate, as prudent, as generous, perhaps, as the circumstances would admit, had been adopted, the National Convention would have disconcerted and disarmed all the opposing parties within the kingdom; and the neighbouring nations, instead of attacking the Revolution, would have contemplated its course with that silent attention and astonishment which a great and important phenomenon never fails to excite.

If the rapacious ambition of any foreign Power had prompted it at that critical period to declare war against France, with a view to seize on some of her provinces, the just cause which the French armies would in that case have sustained, must have secured them victory; and every Frenchman would at this moment rejoice in their success and participate in their glory.

“O my countrymen! whatever have been, whatever are your political opinions, I read in your hearts the sentiments I have just expressed; I hear your groans on account of the disasters, the horrors that the Revolution has produced. You all wish it were possible to bury them in eternal oblivion. But is this sensibility to exhale in barren lamentations? and shall your well-founded sorrow for the wrongs which *cannot* be repaired, prevent your adopting the best remedy for those

Proscribed by the Decree of the 2nd June 1793, he took refuge at Bordeaux, where he had many friends. On the 18th July he was placed “Hors la loi” and being discovered three days later was guillotined without trial. A street in Bordeaux preserves his name for future generations. Bertrand, in this passage, speaks of the King’s sentence as voted by a “small majority.” As a matter of fact the vote for death (after the appeal to the Nation had been rejected) had a majority of one vote.



which *can*? Have at length the courage to be just and consistent. How can the Constitutional Articles, that declare the right of every citizen, without distinction, freely to go out of or remain in France, as he pleases, be reconciled with those decrees which pronounce death and confiscation of goods as the penalties of emigration, without excepting women, children, old men, priests, or even those who had no means of escaping the daggers of assassins, but by flight out of the kingdom? Cease to make a crime in some, of what you have granted to others as a right. You have proved that citizens may be found in every class worthy of the highest employment in the State by their abilities; let it now be proved that they are deserving of them by their justice, their moderation, and their wisdom, because those virtues are as necessary under a republican government as in a monarchy. Victories enough have immortalized the bravery of the French armies, and proved their immense superiority over those of their enemies. It is not on the Frontiers that the most dangerous enemies of the national happiness are to be found; but among yourselves. Are you not at once attacked by anarchy, the abuse of power, rapacity, jealousy, mutual hatred, by all those passions which excite to crimes, and which endanger liberty and property? Those are the foes you have to overcome. Your harassed country demands no more triumphs, no more laurels at your hands; it requires repose; it requires happiness; neither of which is to be obtained but by a government essentially founded on justice. It expects freedom, no doubt; and no nation had a better title to expect it; but not that freedom of which Robespierre and Marat were the apostles, and under which it was so long and so cruelly oppressed.

“The freedom which France requires is that which will secure to each individual the most extensive lawful exercise of all his physical and moral faculties. Find, if you can, the

elements of this freedom, or rather the power of producing it in your present republican form of government. Find there the means of rendering the French people of all classes more happy than they were under a monarchical form of government: then, but not till then, will you be able to flatter yourself with having established the republic; because you will then have the general interest to support it. But do not imagine that the present race of mankind can remain any longer in a state of wretchedness and misery, without some other compensation than the uncertain perspective of happiness to be enjoyed by their posterity. Weigh with attention the advantages and disadvantages of your republican constitution; compare them without prejudice with those of the ancient monarchy, of the abuses of which I am as great an enemy as any of you can be; but what necessity is there for re-establishing the abuses? Compare your present government with a monarchy as wisely limited and regulated as the ancient constitution of France might be. When you have calmly made this comparison, and weighed every circumstance, you will be able to decide, whether the most distinguished writers on government, ancient and modern, have all been under an error, when they asserted,—

“ 1st. That the more extensive and populous an empire is, the more power is required to be placed in the hand of Government :

“ 2d. That the power of Government diminishes in proportion to the number of hands which exercise it. The more people there are in any country to command, the fewer will there be to obey :

“ 3d. That popular elections are more favourable to intriguing, restless, and wrong-headed men, than to prudent and virtuous citizens :

“ 4th. That the expense of Administration is infinitely more

considerable in a republic than in a monarchy; because in the first a greater number must have employments.

“If all those propositions are erroneous, and if you can demonstrate this, not by words, but by facts, you may in that case bring the majority of the nation to continue to approve of a republican form of government; but on the contrary, you will do well to remember, that if any one of them is true, the fate of the republic is decided; and all your efforts, all your talents, and the most despotie measures, will only be able to retard its fall and your ruin a very short time. It is to be hoped then that you will be sufficiently prudent and courageous to behave like real patriots, and not to conceal the truth, but to declare it openly; and if the prevailing desire of the citizens at the approaching primary assemblies,<sup>3</sup> being en-

<sup>3</sup>The approaching primary Elections to which Bertrand alludes were the elections to the Corps Legislatif in March and April 1797, which resulted in the return of a strong “moderate” (or as we should now say, Conservative) majority, among whom were a few open royalists and many who would probably have preferred a restoration to a renewal of the Terror.

These elections led to the Coup d’État of the 18th Fructidor (4th September 1797) which decimated the Legislative Body, destroyed the last chance of establishing an orderly constitutional republic, and led through a period of anarchy and bankruptcy to the autocratic rule of Napoleon Bonaparte, as First Consul and Emperor.

It is hardly necessary to say that the French Parlements bore no resemblance to the Parliaments of England or other countries. They were the supreme “Sovereign” Law Courts of France. There were in all thirteen of these Courts, Paris, Toulouse; Grenoble, Bordeaux, Dijon, Aix, Rouen, Rennes, Pau, Metz, Besancon, Douai, and Nancy. The most ancient and powerful of these Courts was the Parlement of Paris, which had jurisdiction over a large portion of France containing a population of not less than ten millions. The Paris Parlement was not however the Supreme Court of the entire nation, since there was no appeal from the other Sovereign Courts to that of Paris. The Magistrates who held office in these courts, had for several centuries, purchased their first posts which in some cases were heredi-

lightened by your wisdom and experience, and uninfluenced either by bribery or by terror, should declare for monarchy; if the certainty of finding in the legal successor of Louis XVI. the faithful executor of the last will of that good King, who wrote 'I forgive, with all my heart, those who have become my enemies, without my having ever given them any reason for being so; and I pray that God may forgive them also,' should determine the nation to restore the ancient throne of the Bourbons; you will have the glory of having prepared and promoted that happy event. France, being thus restored to her King and to happiness, will forget all your past

tary. They could however be promoted to higher office without additional payments. Consequently, except in cases of serious misconduct, each Magistrate held office for life and this independence of the Crown gave to the Judges of France, the "Noblesse of the Robe," a high degree of authority and prestige which was at times beneficial and at other times prejudicial to the freedom and welfare of the nation. In addition to their judicial duties, the Parlements possessed the right of registering royal Edicts, and this registration was necessary before these Edicts became the Law of the Land. If the Parlement refused to register an Edict the Government was compelled either to abandon it, or to summon a "Lit de Justice" in which the King (or in the Provincial Parlements, his representatives) summoned the Parlement and ordered the registrations to be carried through. Gradually, and especially during the long and feeble reign of Louis XV., during which the royal authority was continually losing ground, the Parlements construed this right of registration to include the power of debating and criticising each clause as an Edict. It was the refusal of the Parlement of Paris in July 1787, to register the Edicts imposing fresh taxes on land and stamps, on the ground that only the nation assembled in the States-General, had the power to authorise new and permanent taxation, which rendered the summoning of the States-General inevitable. The popularity which the Parlements acquired by their opposition to the Court during the years immediately preceding the Revolution was as enthusiastic as it was evanescent. Most of the "Cahiers" (statements of the grievances and desires of each constituency) bitterly denounced them and they were suppressed with hardly a voice raised in their defence, by the Decrees of the National Assembly of the 3rd November 1789 and the 24th May 1790.

errors, and will remember with gratitude this last blessing which she will receive from you."

Those to whom this is addressed ought not to despise the advice it contains, because it comes from an *Émigré*; for that *Émigré* can, with propriety, no more be called an aristocrat than a democrat; he is, what he has always been, a downright royalist, and that from a love to his country, having always been convinced that France can never be happy but under a monarchical government. After I was placed in situations that enabled me to know the personal character of Louis XVI., I confess that my original attachment to monarchy was strengthened by the contemplation of his virtues; but if ever my country should become more prosperous and happy as a republic than it was as a monarchy, though I should for ever bitterly lament the sad fate of the King and royal family, yet my wishes and prayers for a continuation of the prosperity of France would be as sincere as those of the most ardent republican.

I foresee, without uneasiness, that the publication of these Memoirs will offend the violent of all parties, but I have formed the resolution of making no answer to any attack that may be made against my political opinions. I have freely declared them. I leave them to answer for themselves, and to the judgment of the candid: however, I retain the right of rectifying in the original such as may appear hereafter, in my own judgment, to be erroneous. As for the facts which I have related from my own knowledge, for these I think myself answerable. I defy the most violent of my enemies to bring contradictory proof to any one of them; and I now come under the engagement of bringing the most incontestible evidence of the truth of all that hereafter may be contested.



PRIVATE MEMOIRS  
OF  
LOUIS THE SIXTEENTH.

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CHAPTER I.

A view of the State of France, previous to the assembling of the States General in 1789.—Their convocation absolutely necessary. — The advantages which might have been derived from it.— The causes of the mischiefs which followed.— The character of Louis XVI.— Of M. de Maurepas.

THE memoirs of a Minister, who remained only five months and a half in power, may be supposed to contain nothing very interesting to history; yet no period of equal duration can present such a number of extraordinary and disastrous events as that which unhappily terminated the reign of the virtuous and unfortunate Louis XVI.; a few months of which furnish a greater number of important incidents than whole years of the brilliant reign of Louis XIV.

These Memoirs are drawn up from notes which I made during and since my administration, of some interesting occurrences, some of which are very little, and others not known at all. I had the best opportunity of being well informed of them, from the particular confidence with which my zeal was honoured by the king and queen, and from my private correspondence with their Majesties till the fatal period of the 10th of August 1792.



These events, which I have classed according to their dates, and related with the simplicity and scrupulous truth which ought to characterise history, will assist in completing that of the Revolution, and give a just idea of the various persons who acted a part in its different scenes. But above all, I wish to unveil the real character, the virtues, and imperfections of our unfortunate monarch, whose concessions to his people, and desire to see them happier, were so cruelly and ungratefully repaid.

Had the council at that time been composed of firmer and more enlightened ministers, the pious intentions of Louis might have been fulfilled; not by the extravagant, and at all times dangerous, expedient of changing the government, but by restoring the original vigour to our ancient monarchy, by re-establishing its excellent laws, and by the reformation of abuses which were the consequence of those laws having become obsolete. People of moderation would then have found in this government, so unjustly decried, the basis of a liberty as real and extensive as that of which the English are so proud, and which was secured to us and increased by a more vigilant and active police. We should have found in our laws the prohibition of Letters de Cachet, the necessity of obtaining the consent of the States-General in order to establish taxes in proportion to the means of the contributors, the responsibility of ministers and of all the agents of government, the equality of every citizen in the eye of the law; in a word, all that the nation could desire, all that the deputies to the States-General were instructed by their constituents to demand.

This was what ought, and certainly what would have been, effected by the meeting of the States-General, had they been firmly retained within their ancient limits, their powers, and their rights, by a minister who possessed the virtues, energy,

and abilities of the immortal L'Hospital, whom (as the president Henault observes) we ought to have before our eyes as a model, by which to judge of those who in difficult times dare pretend to fill the same place.

But because the States-General produced the most execrable revolution that ever existed, is it Louis we ought to accuse? After being so unworthily outraged by the guilty authors of this revolution, can he with justice be reproached by its numerous victims? No, certainly he cannot; for no one is ignorant that it was not in his power to refuse assembling the States-General; he was forced to it, not only by the universal cry of the kingdom, but by the deplorable imprudence of the Parlements,<sup>1</sup> in declaring "that they did not represent the

<sup>1</sup> The States-General formed the Grand Council of the Nation summoned irregularly, at periods of exceptional danger or difficulty.

Between the years 1302 and 1789 the States-General had been called together on twenty-four occasions. During the fourteenth century it had sat ten times, during the fifteenth eight times, during the sixteenth once and again once during the seventeenth, in 1614. Since that date it had never been summoned. Its duties and powers were therefore very ill defined, and consequently when Louis XVI. in 1788 as a final resource, after the refusal of the Parlements to grant fresh taxes, determined to summon the States-General, no one exactly knew how the members were to be elected, how they were to vote, how long they were to sit or how their powers were to be extended or limited. In all previous sessions of the States-General, the whole body had been divided into three "Orders," the Clergy, the Noblesse, and the "Tiers État" or Third Estate, consisting of the Commons or People. In 1788, the First Order, the Clergy, was composed of widely different social classes. The Bishops, the Dignitaries and the higher religious orders, such as the Benedictines, were for the most part drawn from old families and their sympathies were with the Order of the Noblesse. The Cures, Vicaires, and the lower religious orders, Franciscans, Capuchins and so forth were mostly the sons of small tradesmen or peasants and were disposed to make common cause with the "Third Order."

The Second Order, the "Noblesse," consisted of somewhat more than 100,000 individuals. Among them were the members of Noble families, ancient or modern; but the great majority were Magistrates,

nation, as they had hitherto pretended to do; that the registering the laws could not supply the want of the national consent in matters of taxation; that they would no longer exert a right which they had usurped, and which conscience and honour forced them to relinquish."

Shall it be said that the King, though forced to convene the States-General, has at least to reproach himself for not having employed ministers capable of moderating and directing their measures? But situated as he was, how could he be sufficiently acquainted with the characters and talents of men, to enable him to make a better choice? Can it be forgot, that the King and Queen had always an extreme repugnance against M. Necker; that in calling him to the ministry in 1788, their Majesties only yielded to the public opinion, and to the unanimous desire of the nation, by which he was considered as the only man capable of re-establishing public affairs? His second recall, in July 1789, was still less a matter of choice; and this fatal necessity of recalling M. Necker gave him the power of forming the ministry as was most agreeable to himself.

The double representation of the Tiers may be justly regarded as one of the principal causes of our disasters. The king is blamed for having consented to it, contrary to the advice of the majority of the Assembly of Notables. But I must observe upon this head, that the people were already prepared for revolt, by the insurrections to which they had been excited six months before: they had been taught to know their own strength, and to despise that of the Government; consequently, if instead of consenting to the double representation of the Tiers, the King had embraced the measure of dismissing M. Necker, whom the commons then regarded as purchasers or owners of estates which carried with them some sort of title, officials who had purchased or inherited one of the innumerable posts which exempted its holders from the "Taille," the direct tax levied on all who could not plead the privilege of "Noblesse."

their zealous protector and as their father, it is more than probable that the people, attributing his disgrace to his popularity, would have risen everywhere in his favour, as they did in the month of July following, and would have equally forced his Majesty to recall him, and to grant the double representation of the Tiers-État.<sup>2</sup> I shall even add, that in such

<sup>2</sup>The "Tiers État, or Third Order, was composed of all men of French Nationality, not belonging to either of the higher Orders, who were twenty-five years of age and who were inscribed in the lists of those who paid the "Taille" in the Commune which they inhabited. In all previous sessions of the States-General, each Order had selected the same number of Deputies, and each had sat and voted separately, meeting together only when summoned to do so by the Sovereign.

As soon as the elections of 1788-89 were announced the question of doubling the representatives of the Third Order (the great majority of the Nation) was raised. The question was answered in the negative by the Parlements and by the "Assembly of Notables" summoned in 1788 to discuss the various difficulties which arose as to the manner of electing representatives. It was finally settled by the Principal Minister, Jacques Necker, in his Report to the King, printed on the 2nd Dec. 1788.

In this report Necker, for the reasons given in Bertrand's Memoirs (Vol. I., pp. 24-26) recommends that the Third Order should have a number of representatives equalling those of the two other Orders put together. The number of Deputies of the three Orders was fixed in their Report at 1,000, but in point of fact there were considerably more.

It is difficult to give the exact figures, which are either evaded or stated differently by every historian. Even the contemporary lists vary.

I take the following from the most carefully compiled of these contemporary statements.

If not absolutely accurate it is at any rate sufficiently so for practical purposes. It runs thus:—Representatives of the Clergy 293 (of whom 79 were of the Higher, and 214 of the Parochial Clergy), Noblesse 289. Third Order 594 (of whom 353 were lawyers) Total 1,176.

Necker in his Report, leaves undecided the far more important question as of whether the three Orders were to sit together or separately.

Yet it was obvious that if the Third Order were to sit apart, the

circumstances it would have been very difficult for the King to have avoided being drawn in by the specious reasons which M. Necker employed to determine him. He represented to the King, "that the attacks which the Parlements, supported by the nobility, had made on his authority, had almost annihilated it; that the conduct of the clergy, in the first Assembly of Notables, proved but too well that their sentiments and wishes corresponded with those of the nobility and magistracy; that it could no longer be concealed that all those different bodies uniting to demand the convocation of the States-General, was less with a view to re-establish the royal authority than to render it quite impotent; that this would be the result of their deliberations, unless the two first orders were bereaved of that weight which the ancient form of convocation gave them in the Assembly; that the only means of attaining this important end was to compose the order of the Tiers of a number of deputies equal to that of the two other orders united; that no law existed to regulate the number of deputies that each order ought to send; that there was not an instance of two convocations being uniform in this respect, and therefore the measure he proposed, so far from being irregular, was no more than the exercise of a right which the King always had possessed, of fixing the number of the deputies of every order; that the third order was greatly interested that the King should have it in his power to protect it from the

number of its representatives was of no importance; whereas if the three Orders were merged in one body, the Third Order, with the assistance of the lower Clergy, would have a sufficient standing majority to outvote the Noblesse and the higher Clergy whenever they wished to do so.

Hence the refusal of the representatives of the Third Order to act until the two other Orders joined them; their assumption on the 15th June of the title of the National Assembly and their final triumph over the King and the other Orders after the Royal Séance of the 23rd June 1789.

oppressive enterprises of the two others; and that a sense of gratitude for this mark of confidence, as well as a regard for its own interest, would undoubtedly engage the third order to strengthen his Majesty's hands, and enable him to re-establish a solid and vigorous government, without which the monarchy was lost." Such were the arguments which M. Necker employed in support of the famous reference to the council, upon which the double representation to the Tiers-État was granted; and unfortunately there was not one of the ministers at that time who was capable of firmly opposing this opinion, which the King adopted through the error or the weakness of his council.

It has been incessantly repeated, "that all might yet have been prevented, had the King placed himself at the head of his troops, and of his nobility," etc. Of his troops! Could it be believed that there then existed many regiments that could be depended on, after experiencing the defection of the French guards and the regiment of Flanders, in both of which corps more confidence had been placed than in any other? Besides, it was known that M. de Bouillé had written to the King, that of one hundred and twenty battalions of infantry, and eighty of cavalry, which he commanded, he could rely on five battalions only, and these were foreign troops. In addition to this, the officers of those regiments the least infected with the spirit of the Revolution, all agreed, that the very idea of being attacked by the populace, armed with sticks and pikes, was more terrifying to the soldiers than the army of an enemy ranged in order of battle. With regard to the nobility, although those of its members, who owed most to the court, had basely repaid its favours with revolting ingratitude, and although a great many others had adopted the principles of the Revolution, there yet remained many brave and loyal Chevaliers of the old stamp, who would have sought



the glory of saving the monarchy at the risk of their own lives. But they were not possessed of sufficient force to insure the success which their loyalty deserved. The King was of this opinion. Ought it to be imputed to him as a crime? Ought he to be reproached, because he would not expose the lives of his most valuable subjects, without a moral probability of success; he, who would never risk the life of the most obscure individual to secure his own? Nothing can be more just than what M. de Malesherbes said to me one day, in an interesting conversation which will be found in these Memoirs, "that this extreme sensibility, this tenderness of disposition, so amiable in private life, and in times of tranquillity, often become, in times of revolution, more fatal to a king, than even certain vices would have been." Thus it was that the errors of Louis XVI. may truly be said to have originated in a virtuous principle. As to these weaknesses (for undoubtedly he was not exempted from these), I do not endeavour to conceal them. In the course of these Memoirs, I more than once lament the indecision of that unfortunate prince; his repugnance to adopt the bold measures which might have saved him; his being deficient in that energy of character, that self-confidence which imposes on the multitude, who are ever ready to believe that he who commands with firmness and an air of authority, possesses the means of enforcing obedience. But I will venture to say, that the very faults above enumerated did not belong to his natural character, but were engrafted upon it by the selfish indolence of M. de Maurepas,<sup>3</sup> that ancient minister, whom the court flatterers were not ashamed to call

<sup>3</sup> Jean Frédéric Phélypeaux, Count de Maurepas, was 73 years old, and had lived in retirement for 25 years, when Louis XVI. came to the throne in 1774. The two principal measures of his Ministry consisted of the recall of the former Parlement in place of the new body known as the "Maupéou Parlement," and of the declaration of war against England, during the American War of Independence.



the Nestor of France, because he resembled Nestor in age; having been discarded in the former reign, he was now recalled to direct the first steps of Louis XVI. in the career of royalty. Previous to the recall of this minister, the young Prince had been noted for an awkward forwardness of manner and impatience of contradiction, through which, however, a goodness of heart and love of justice always appeared. He did not find in his pupil any of those passions so common to his years, but the seeds of all the precious qualities with which Providence endows the minds of those princes who do honour to the throne, and are destined for the happiness of the people. What task could be more easy and honourable than that which this pretended Mentor had to fulfill? His care and attention were not required to render the young monarch virtuous, but to unfold those virtues he already possessed, and so to direct them, that those qualities which form a great prince might take the lead of those which merely form a man of probity; to teach him to estimate the talents of men, that he might thereby be empowered to employ them conformably to their abilities. He ought, at the same time, to have given him such an idea of his own powers and resources, as would have inspired him with a reasonable degree of confidence in himself, and have enabled him to act with that steadiness which always creates respect; for a prince of a good understanding,

Early in his Ministry, he introduced Turgot, Malesherbes and Necker, to the Council, but speedily becoming jealous of, and alarmed by their growing reputation, he continued, one by one, to rid himself of them. Maurepas, even in his old age, was a brilliant talker, overflowing with epigram and humour, and Louis XVI. loved to converse freely with him. In this way he gained such an ascendance over the young and awkward King that he assumed more or less the position of a "Mayor of the Palace" and acquired the baleful influence which Bertrand de Moleville attributes to him.

He died at the age of 80 in November 1781. It is worthy of remark that Turgot, to the profound misfortune of the King and Country, died in March of the same year.

who is conscious of his own value, may sometimes appear superior, but will never appear inferior, to himself.

If M. de Maurepas had consulted the glory and the happiness of France, this would have been the path he would have pursued. But a glory only in prospect, and the happiness of a nation, were enjoyments of too refined a nature for that Minister. He wished to revenge, or at least to indemnify himself, for many years of exile; and the unlimited confidence which the King placed in him, furnished him with too ample means. His chief endeavour was to keep the King ignorant of his affairs, disgust him with business, extinguish all his energy, and render him an absolute cipher, that he, the minister, might reign in his name. In this manner the first sceptre in Europe became the mere babble of dotage and indifference. He had persuaded the King, that he ought never to decide upon any measure himself, but always be determined by the opinion of the majority in the council. M. de Maurepas was by this means assured of always having his own plans adopted, not only because the ministers, being nominated by him, would give no opinion contrary to his, but also because he had accustomed them never to carry any important affair to the council, before they had submitted it to his decision, which necessarily became that of the king. In this manner Louis XVI., although endowed with good sense and a just understanding, acted the passive part in council which M. de Maurepas prescribed to him as the only means of exempting himself from the reproach of being answerable for the faults of administration. On this account the King took great care never to let his opinion be known during the discussion of any question of whatever importance; and he was always decided by the opinion of the majority. This conduct of the King's, which made him be accused of total indifference, was therefore owing to a very different principle. The tedium,

inseparable from such an insignificant situation, promoted his passion for hunting, where alone he enjoyed full liberty; and the magnificence with which that diversion was conducted at Versailles made him forget the insipidity to which M. de Maurepas had reduced the regal office; and though the King often pushed this exercise to excess, the Minister took care not to warn him against it, because he found his Majesty more pliant to his counsels when overwhelmed with fatigue than at any other time. He had so great an ascendancy over this prince's mind, as to render him distrustful of all who approached him; even of those very Ministers whom he himself had prompted the King to appoint; and while he declared it impossible to choose any more unexceptionable, he allowed no opportunity to escape of depreciating their talents and their characters, and continually admonished the King to be upon his guard against their views, their intentions, and all their measures.

This general distrust, which M. de Maurepas infused and carefully cherished, for about eight years, in the King's mind, had taken such deep root, that it ever afterwards adhered to him; for even in the most dangerous and critical moments of his life, when his security depended upon it, he never could be persuaded to place full confidence in the zeal and fidelity of his most devoted servants.

M. de Maurepas deserves also the severest blame for neglecting to employ any means to correct the King's excessive timidity, which almost deprived him of the power of speech when he was in company with people whom he was not in the habit of seeing every day. His restraint, upon those occasions, made him forget, for the time, things which he was perfectly well acquainted with, although he possessed a very happy memory. M. de Maurepas certainly might in a great degree have corrected this weakness, at all times a great incon-

venience, but at this particular time dangerous to the throne; but so far from remedying the evil, M. de Maurepas increased it by his satirical raillery at the rough abruptness of the King's manner, and upon what some of the courtiers had the insolence to call "*ses coups de bœuf*" (blows of a boar's tusk). Ah! if he had indeed been capable of giving such severe blows, how much is it to be wished that he had directed them against those false, ambitious, and ungrateful men; those traitors, whose base and perfidious plans have brought on a revolution, the details of which are so shocking, that if we had found them in a history of the most barbarous nation, we should have supposed them greatly exaggerated; a revolution, which has been justly compared to the irruptions of a frightful volcano, announced by a hollow awful murmur, and by the shaking of the neighbouring mountains, finally bursting forth in torrents of fire, spreading death and desolation all around.

In following up this comparison, it may be said, that if the indifference and selfishness of M. de Maurepas excited the fermentation of the impure elements of the Revolution, the incapacity and extravagant violence of the Archbishop of Sens (Lomenie de Brienne) conducted the king and the monarchy to the mouth of the volcano, and the ambition and foolish vanity of M. Necker, precipitated them into it. As the connection which I had with the two last-mentioned ministers, in the year 1788, when I was Intendant of Brittany, and the events which took place in that province, where the Revolution actually began, may throw some lights upon its origin and first progress, I will succinctly enumerate the particulars in these Memoirs, because a knowledge of the symptoms which were the forerunners of this too memorable catastrophe are not less interesting or less useful than that of its consequences.

## CHAPTER II.

Character of the Archbishop of Sens.—The King's opinion of him.—First Assembly of Notables.—Intrigues to overturn M. de Calonne's plans.—Their success.—The Archbishop of Sens appointed first minister.—Project of reformation in the magistracy.—Motives of my repugnance to concur in this scheme communicated to the Chancellor.—His dissimulation.—My departure for Brittany with M. de Thiard.—His character.—Arrival of orders from the King.—I send my resignation.—The Minister's answer.—A capital fault of the Archbishop of Sens.—Reflections.

MONSIEUR DE BRIENNE,<sup>1</sup> Archbishop of Sens, who had long ardently aspired to the ministry, had always been kept out, in spite of the high reputation of his talents, upon account of the bad opinion which the King entertained of his morals and

<sup>1</sup> All historians of the Revolution, whatever their political views, agree with Bertrand de Moleville, as to the character of Lomenie de Brienne and as to the disastrous influence which he exercised during the critical period immediately preceding the Revolution. His character is a curious compound of ambition for fame, greed for promotion and for wealth on the one side, and on the other, absence of energy, strength of purpose or talent of any description. The fifteen months of his Ministry (1st May 1787 to 25th August 1788), were marked by incessant struggles with the Parlement and people, during which the Monarchy lost in power and prestige more than in any previous fifteen years of its existence. One act of importance only survived Lomenie de Brienne's term of office, the Order in Council summoning the States-General to meet on the 1st of May 1789.

His resignation was due to the judiciary refusal of Necker to accept the control of the finances so long as he retained his Ministry. Lomenie therefore retired, having first secured for himself one of the richest dioceses in Europe, the Archbishopric of Sens, the promise of the first Cardinal's Hat vacant (which was bestowed upon him on the 15th Dec. 1788), the coadjutor bishoprick of Sens for one nephew, the colonelcy of a regiment for another, and a post of lady in waiting for his niece.

principles. When it was proposed to his Majesty to receive this unworthy prelate (at that time Archbishop of Toulouse) into the council, the pious prince answered with indignation, "The man does not believe in God." The prelate being apprized of the motives of his Majesty's repugnance, which were but too-well founded, flattered himself that he should be able to obviate them. He endeavoured to give an impression of his conversion, by appearing entirely devoted to the cares of his dioecese, and by practieing, from time to time, some of those public acts of eharity which are always cried up, with exaggeration, in the public papers. This edifying course of good works was interrupted by the death of the Archbishop of Paris, M. de Brienne never once doubting but that his reputation was so perfectly well established, that he should now be esteemed a worthy suecessor to one of the most virtuous prelates in France. He accordingly offered himself as a candidate, and supported his pretensions by the well known credit and intrigues of the Abbé de Vermond. But the King was of opinion, that a belief in the Supreme Being could still less be dispensed with in an Archbishop of Paris, than in a secretary

Lomenie was one of the four Bishops who accepted the Civil Constitution of the Clergy in 1791, an act which permitted his continued residence at Sens under the title of "Bishop of the Department of the Yonne," but compelled him, unwillingly, to return his Cardinal's Hat to the Pope. His end was horrible. On the 9th Nov. 1793, he was arrested and after some delay sent to Paris under the escort of some National Guards, who are said to have grossly maltreated him. Immediately after his arrival in Paris he died (16 Feb. 1794, age 67), either in consequence of the brutalities to which he had been subjected, or by poison taken in despair. It is one of the strangest peculiarities of the Terror, that when the head of a family was sentenced, it became the custom to send as many of his relatives as possible to follow him to the next world. In this case, the younger brother, the Count de Brienne, with his two sons and one daughter, and the nephew who had been created Coadjutor Bishop of Sens were all guillotined together on the 10th May 1794.



of state, and therefore preferred the virtues of M. de Juigné<sup>2</sup> to the supposed talents of M. de Brienne. Indeed it has but too evidently appeared since, that he possessed no other talent but that of doing mischief; and in fact, he did more, and in less time, than the most ignorant, or even the most perfidious minister that ever existed in France or any where else.

The convocation of the first Assembly of Notables, in the year 1788, opened a new prospect to the ambitious hopes and intrigues of Archbishop Lomenie de Brienne. He saw that in the present circumstances, the only chance he had of rising to the ministry depended upon his being able to form a party in the Assembly, sufficiently powerful to overturn M. de Calonne,<sup>3</sup> who was the minister in greatest credit, and author

<sup>2</sup> Antoine Eleanor de Juigné is remarkable for one episode of his long life. In 1770 a disastrous fire broke out at Saint Dizcee, and de Juigné, who was at the time Bishop of Châtres, instituted a scheme of assisting those who had suffered which formed the basis of one of the earliest (if not actually the first) systems of Fire Insurance. The words of Louis XVI. when he selected de Juigné in preference to Lomenie de Brienne for the Archbishopric of Paris are usually thus quoted: "At the very least it is desirable that the Archbishop of Paris should believe in a God." In 1790, de Juigné emigrated. During the last night of his life, Louis XVI. enquired what had become of him. De Juigné returned to Paris in 1802, having previously given in his resignation of his See to the Pope, in order to give Bonaparte a free hand in the most important ecclesiastical appointment made after the Concordat. The First Consul in return created him a Count. De Juigné died, aged 83, in March 1811.

<sup>3</sup>The fate of Charles Alexander de Calonne was a very curious one. So long as he continued to supply the Court with money, borrowed at minor interest, or wrung from the people by anticipated taxation, he was the most popular Minister in France. Perhaps the only person who distrusted or disliked him was the King himself, who clung to the ideas of Calonne's predecessor, Turgot, whom he had been forced greatly against his will, to dismiss.

But when Calonne proposed to the Assembly of Notables which he had summoned, for that purpose, a series of reforms, such as the equal distribution of taxation between the Noblesse, the Clergy and the Third Estate, his popularity fell from him in a moment, the



of a new system of administration, which was at that time laid before the Assembly. The Archbishop prepared his batteries accordingly. The proportional contributions to all taxes, and the alienation of honorary rights depending on benefices were the principal measures which M. de Calonne proposed to this Assembly, in which the clergy had great weight. This attack upon ecclesiastical property offered a favourable opportunity for the enemies of the Minister to excite the most violent opposition against him and his schemes, not only in the Assembly, but also at Court and in the capital. He was so powerfully attacked in so many different ways, that his disgrace seemed inevitable. His fall was accompanied with that of the Chancellor (Hue de Mirosmenil), who, after giving his approbation and support to the plans of M. de Calonne, had the weakness to abandon him, and join his adversaries.

In this manner the King was drawn on by a combination of circumstances, and reduced to the unhappy necessity of forming a new council, and of abandoning the reins of government to Archbishop Lomenie de Brienne. This ambitious man was not contented with occupying the situation from which he had precipitated M. de Calonne; he never rested until he was named the principal Minister, and had supreme influ-

Queen, the Count d'Artois and his brother ministers deserted him and Lomenie by dint of false promises and intrigues supplanted him, as Bertrand truly says, to the infinite loss of the King and the Nation.

Calonne was exiled to Lorraine and ultimately passed to England, where he married a rich widow and lived for many years. In 1802 he solicited from Napoleon permission to return to France, which was granted to him. He died one month later, at the age of 68. Calonne was a man of great ability, but hardly of high character. A thorough man of the world, with an attractive personality and a light touch, he relied much on his own charm of manner and facility in promising what he could not perform: His well-known reply to an extravagant request of Marie Antoinette is thoroughly characteristic of the man: "Madame, if it is possible, it is done already; if impossible, it shall be done."

ence in the departments of all the other ministers, who, some from fear, and others from incapacity, became all the passive instruments of his destructive genius.

The greatest error the King could be guilty of was to dismiss M. de Calonne, before he had put an end to the Assembly of Notables. It must be acknowledged, that this fatal determination, followed by the nomination of the Archbishop of Sens to the ministry, was the immediate cause of the Revolution. Upon this occasion, the Queen entirely gave way to that prejudice which the ambition of the Archbishop of Sens, and the hatred of the Baron de Breteuil,<sup>4</sup> inspired her with

<sup>4</sup> Louis August Le Tonnelier, Baron de Breteuil, was, before the Revolution, a member of the French Diplomatic Service.

He occupied, for several years, the post of French Ambassador at St. Petersburg. He was then transferred to Vienna, where he was replaced by the Cardinal de Rohan. This supersession gave him great offence, and he afterwards took his revenge by personally arresting the Cardinal in the Antechamber of the Royal Chapel at Versailles in connection with the celebrated case of the Queen's Diamond Necklace.

In 1783, he was appointed Minister of the King's Household. It was one of Marie Antoinette's most strongly marked characteristics that she stood by her friends, who were not always well chosen. In the quarrel, related here, between Calonne and de Breteuil, who was her own protégé, she supported the latter and consequently Calonne was dismissed.

Breteuil opposed energetically the summoning of the States-General in 1789. On the 12th July 1789, he was summoned to take over the Control of the Finances, but Necker's triumphant return a few days later deprived him of the office of which he had hardly time to take possession.

In the interim he urged the King to retire to Compiègne, accompanied by all that remained loyal of his Army. Failing to convince Louis XVI. of the necessity of the step he left France. As is stated later in these Memoirs, he received from the King powers "to treat with foreign courts and to propose in the King's name any measures which would tend to re-establish the Royal Authority and the internal tranquillity of the Kingdom."

These powers were revoked by Louis, when he signed the Constitution, 14 Sept. 1791. Breteuil remained abroad, chiefly in Hamburg,

against M. de Calonne. Her Majesty must have bitterly regretted that she ever employed her influence over the King's mind to ruin that minister. As I have as much reason to complain of him as to praise him, I might, without being suspected of prepossession, either write an eulogium or a criticism on his conduct, if the one and the other were not equally foreign to the object of these Memoirs. I shall only observe, therefore, that in spite of the vague and violent declamations echoed from all parts of the Kingdom against this minister, he certainly did nothing to justify the hatred and malice with which he was persecuted. And it is but fair to state, in his vindication, that although the Archbishop of Sens and M. Necker exhausted all their efforts, assiduously examined all the papers relating to his administration, yet they never could find the smallest proof of those heavy charges which have been urged against him.

If M. de Calonne could have foreseen that the King would not permit him to close the Assembly of Notables, he certainly would have not proposed its convocation; but his too great security was his chief error. He was desirous of having his plans adopted by this Assembly, being convinced that he could demonstrate their utility to all who would listen to argument, and disregarding those who opposed him less from conviction than from motives of vengeance and personal enmity: and he had the imprudent integrity to include in the list of Notables almost all the members of the clergy, nobility, and the magistracy, who, to his knowledge, were ill-disposed to him.

To have had nothing to fear from an assembly thus composed, and to have derived all the advantages which were expected from it, there was only one line to be pursued; namely, to

until May 1802, when he returned to France. The Empress Josephine afterwards secured for him a pension of 12,000 francs, on which he lived until his death at the age of 77, in November 1807.

have waited patiently until the committees had finished their deliberations, all the while expressing the utmost gratitude to the individual members for their zeal and sagacity. However ill-disposed some of them were, with respect to M. de Calonne, not one of them was capable of giving a better plan than his. It would be difficult to have any doubts on this head, as it has since appeared that the Archbishop of Sens and M. Necker could do no better than slavishly follow the line their antagonist had traced.

It is also worthy of observation, that amongst all M. de Calonne's enemies, there is not one whose perfidy has not been unmasked in the course of the Revolution, and whose name is not inscribed in the list of the authors of the disasters of France; while he himself has acquired new rights to the esteem and gratitude of all good Frenchmen, by his indefatigable zeal and unlimited sacrifices for the cause of monarchy.

An account of the administration of the Archbishop of Toulouse (who became Archbishop of Sens, and afterwards a Cardinal), being no part of my plan, I shall content myself with observing, that no man's real character seems ever to have been more misunderstood. He was supposed to possess energy, because he was violent; learning, because he was positive; genius, because he had vivacity; talents for governing, because he criticised the administrations of all his predecessors. His friends and adherents, however, have since been sufficiently convinced of their mistake, by the weakness of his resources, by his ignorance, by the incoherence of his ideas, and the absurdity of his measures.

After having exhausted the royal treasury, drained every resource, annihilated public credit, and ruined the powers of the Crown, by employing, upon the slightest occasion, those acts of royal authority which should be resorted to only upon

the last extremity, such as *Lits de justice*, *Lettres de cachet*,<sup>5</sup> the banishment and imprisonment of the Magistrates, he at length, with boldness, but without consideration, attempted to free the government from the restraint of enregistering the laws in the Sovereign Courts of the Kingdom, and of supplying this by enregistering them in a new court, which he named *Cour Pleniere*, and pretended to *re-establish*, although no such Court had ever existed in France.

To give to this Edict some degree of splendour, he united with it several other laws relative to the Courts and administration of justice, containing reformations of the utmost importance. By one of the new laws, all the Sovereign Courts of the Kingdom were interrupted till further orders, to prevent remonstrances and protests against that rash regulation.

The Cardinal was extremely vain of having conceived this last part of the plan, which he imagined was a stroke of genius, and he wished to prevent its transpiring till the moment of enregistering the Edicts; this was intended to be done by a *Lit de justice* at Paris, and by royal commissioners, at the same instant, in all courts of the Kingdom. As it would

<sup>5</sup> A "Lettre de Cachet" was a letter signed by the King, but as a matter of fact more often signed for him by one of his secretaries; countersigned by the Minister to whose Department the letter referred; and sealed with the Royal Arms. The term *Lettre de Cachet* first occurs in the year 1560. *Lettres de Cachet* were used, as everybody knows, to order the arbitrary imprisonment or exile of an individual, but, as is not so generally known, they were used more frequently to express the King's approbation of the conduct of one of his subjects; to convoke public Assemblies; to order Courts of Law to deliberate on some given subject; or to order and regulate public ceremonies or state receptions.

There is no historical warrant for the statement, so often made, that *Lettres de Cachet* were frequently (especially in the reign of Louis XV.) given to favorite Ministers or Mistresses in blank, to be filled in as they chose.

*Lettres de Cachet*, ordering imprisonment or exile, were abolished by a Decree of the Constituent Assembly, 16 March, 1790.

have been necessary to have trusted a great number of clerks, if the orders had been forwarded from the offices, according to the usual custom, a secret printing-house was established at Versailles, and the printers were shut up and watched like prisoners till the decrees were printed.

The important day, for the universal enregistering the Edicts, being fixed upon, the King's Commissioners received orders to set out instantly for all the cities in the Kingdom, where there existed Sovereign Courts of justice, and to remain there till they received his Majesty's further orders and instructions. In the meantime, great pains were taken to conceal the business in agitation. This was so much attended to, that the orders for the departure of the intendants passed through the office of the Minister of Finance, to make it imagined that it related to some matter of that nature. But in reality, neither the Minister of Finance, nor any other minister, except the *Garde des Sceaux* (Lamoignon), were in the secret.

At the time I received orders for my departure, it was generally suspected at Paris that the chief object of the Archbishop of Sens was some great reformation in the magistracy; and it being contrary to my principles to accept a commission, without knowing its import, I took occasion, from the above report, and from my misunderstanding with the Parlement of Brittany, to explain myself to M. Lamoignon. I expressly told him, "that if the intended alteration was directed against the Parlement, its success, no less than my delicacy, required that some other should be employed in Brittany; for if I accepted the commission, it would never be doubted but that I was the author of the measure, and had sought this occasion of revenge; and that such an idea would irritate people's minds so much against me, that my services in that province would be more prejudicial than useful." He



answered without hesitation, that I was alarmed without cause; for that the order for my departure being drawn up by the Minister of Finance, there was reason to believe that the object of my commission regarded the business of that department only; "and you may be assured," added he, "that I have no hand in your being sent." My uneasiness was dissipated by this positive assurance; and I set out for Brittany in the end of April, with the Count de Thiard, who was as ill-informed as myself of the object of our commission.

The Count de Thiard was one of the most amiable men of the Court. It was impossible to have more sweetness of disposition, a more pleasing and easy style of conversation, or a more dignified and graceful manner, than he possessed. He was generally beloved, and his company sought after in all the agreeable societies of Paris and of the Court; but he was the man of all France least calculated for business. It tired him to death. He even could not comprehend its language. He was for several years Commander-in-Chief in Provence, where he was adored, because he had no duty to perform that was either difficult or disagreeable. It seemed as if he resided there for no other purpose than to give balls and entertainments, of which he did the honours perfectly well. One of the greatest blunders the Court could have committed, was to send a man of this description, who hated trouble, to a province, which, even in ordinary times, had been considered as the most troublesome to govern of any in the Kingdom; but in times of insurrection, this command ought to have been given to a man inured to public affairs, and capable of overawing the seditious by the vigour of his character. It was perhaps imagined, that the amiable qualities of M. de Thiard would have compensated for that force of character in which he was deficient; but this kind of compensation never succeeded in Brittany. The weakness of Government, or of its agents, was



always extremely dangerous in that province. The only successful method of executing the King's orders was to proceed in one steady course, without being moved by the clamour of turbulent spirits, or even by scissions, if they came to be again in vogue.

Scission was a term made use of in the provincial parlements and assemblies of the States, importing, that the members of the parlements or assemblies had broken off all communication, of a private or social nature, with the intendant or commandant of the province. A scission was never announced until it had been formally deliberated on in a general meeting of the members. The motives were sometimes of a public and important nature, as the registration of a law by the express orders of the King; at other times, the causes assigned were rather frivolous, such as an expression used in a private society, and construed in a bad sense; omitting some mark of attention, which, it was thought, ought to have been paid to certain individuals, as attending them to the door, or, inviting them to entertainments. But as the members of those assemblies often stood in need, for themselves or their relations, of the good offices of the Intendant or Commandant, who had nothing to ask or expect in return, and generally kept the best tables and the best wine in the province, it will not be difficult to determine who were the greatest losers by the scission.

During our journey to Rennes, I communicated to M. de Thiard what had passed between the Chancellor and myself; and I did not conceal my intention of informing the First President of it. I had also resolved to announce my arrival to the members of Parlement, although their scission with me might have excused me from this ceremony, which was usual when an Intendant arrived in the province for the first time, or after having been for any considerable time absent. I waited accordingly on the President, and after giving him

an account of my conversation with the Chancellor, I expressed my unalterable attachment to the sound principles of the Magistracy, and assured him, that it would give me real concern to see them attacked, if notwithstanding M. de Lamoignon's assurances, there was any truth in the report concerning the Archbishop of Sens' project.

This conversation, of which the President gave an account to his company, and the visits I paid the same day to all the members of the Parlement, made the scission be taken off immediately, and obtained me innumerable deputations and compliments.

We had been about five days at Rennes, when a courier of the Cabinet arrived, with an enormous packet for us. This packet contained several others, some of which, to the number of eight or nine, were only to be opened in the General Meeting of the Parlement, which we were ordered to convene on the following day; and the other dispatches were to be read at the end of the deliberation. The King's orders, which were addressed to us, did not contain any explanation of the nature of the measure with which we were charged; they only regarded the magistracy and the administration of justice: but the cover of one of the largest packets, which, from the form, seemed to contain *lettres de cachet*, was a little torn by the motion of the carriage. I could not resist my curiosity to know whether or not my conjectures were well founded. I tore it a little wider, in the presence of M. de Thiard, who was no less curious than myself, and I discovered that this packet contained only *lettres de cachet*, and that they were destined for the members of Parlement.

No more was requisite to convince me that M. de Lamoignon's assurances (upon the faith of which I left Paris) were insincere. But as this was not the case with the declaration I made to him, I immediately determined to send in my

resignation, by a letter which I read to the First President, and to the Bishop of Rennes, who happened to be at M. de Thiard's house when I wrote. My letter was sent the same day by an extraordinary courier, and the Bishop of Rennes set out for Paris, to remonstrate with the Archbishop of Sens, imagining that he had sufficient influence to prevail upon him to renounce, or at least defer, the measure relating to Brittany, till the next convocation of the states of this province; but he was not listened to; and I received from M. de Lamoignon the following letter:

“I showed your letter to the King, Sir; his Majesty desires me to inform you, that he commands you, in the first place, to execute his orders, under pain of disobedience; and he will afterwards determine concerning your resignation.”

This order embarrassed me extremely, from the difficulty there was in reconciling its execution with what was expected of me by the Parlement and the public, who were informed of the circumstances of my resignation. My only resource was in M. Thiard's ignorance of the duties which both of us had to discharge at the General Meeting of the Parlement, and also of the terms in which our orders were expressed upon this article. It was repeated, in almost every page, that “the King's first commissary, and in default of him, his second,” should give such and such an order, and should pronounce such a decree, etc. I concluded, that in quality of the King's *second* commissary, I had merely a passive part to act in the Assembly, and that my presence was only necessary to supply the place of the first commissary, in case of his sudden death or sickness. I knew very well that this was contrary to the custom; but happily M. de Thiard, who never had been engaged in affairs of this kind, was ignorant of it. My reasons appeared to him very good, and conformable to the tenor of our orders. He did not make the least difficulty on this account,

but only begged of me to give him an exact note in writing, of all that he should have to do and to say in the Parlement, of the responses which it was easy to foresee would be made to him, and what he ought to say in return. I wrote this note upon the spot, and made it as clear as I possibly could; but he did not find it such as he desired, and begged of me to write another, in such a manner that he should only have to read over what I wrote. In short, he required a dramatic scene, and the part of every actor so clearly specified as to prevent all mistakes. I set about this task, and made his part so plain, that a child of six years old, who could read, would not have been embarrassed; and accordingly M. de Thiard was perfectly satisfied.

The greatest, and perhaps the most fatal error, which the Archbishop of Sens committed, as it began the disorganization of the army, was his setting almost all the troops of the Kingdom in motion, with a view of overawing the people by a great appearance of force, and of preventing insurrections in the towns where his imprudent measure was to be executed. He did not reflect, that discovering to the people that an insurrection is thought possible, suggests to them the idea that they are feared, and by this very means renders them formidable. Undoubtedly Government ought always to be in a situation to repress and punish insurrections; but if, instead of employing the usual means, in the prudent manner that a well-regulated police affords, it begins by what is its last resource, and ought never to be adopted except in the utmost extremity, by exhibiting the whole armed force before the eyes of the people at once, the multitude are soon familiarised to what was intended to impress them with terror; they see the utmost force that can be brought against them, they compare it with their own numbers, and are inspired with courage, from a conviction of their own superiority. Thus

many regiments may have less effect than a detachment of fifty dragoons, under more prudent management, would have had. In the year 1771, the Duke of Fitzjames employed only three brigades of Marechassée to consummate, in Brittany, the most absolute, and perhaps the most arbitrary act of authority which was ever exerted in France; namely, the suppression of all the Parlement of the Kingdom, and the installation of new judges; and the King's commands were fully executed, without causing the least popular commotion. No one even dared to murmur upon the occasion. It will be seen, in the following chapter, that M. de Thiard, with much more considerable means, was employed to carry a much less violent measure in the same province, and failed in a manner that proved fatal to the royal authority.

## PRIVATE MEMOIRS OF

### CHAPTER III.

General Meeting of the Parlements.—Arrival of the King's Commissaries in the Palais.—Riot of the attorneys' clerks.—Difficulty which the King's Commissaries found to enter the Grand Chamber.—An account of what passed at this sitting.—Retreat of the King's Commissaries.—The insults which they received.—Insurrection of the people.—Violent excesses committed against the soldiers.—The arrival of fresh troops at Rennes.—The inutility of this measure.—Its consequences.

THE Parlement being assembled on the 10th of May, at eight o'clock in the morning, according to the King's orders, I went there along with M. de Thiard. We went escorted by his guard, and by a detachment of the regiment of Rohan. The troops were ranged on both sides of the street as we went to the palace. The profound silence which prevailed for some time, as we moved along, was soon interrupted by hisses, and the noise of catcalls from the windows, which were repeated by the mob in the street, who became more daring and noisy when they observed that the soldiers took no notice of them.

M. de Thiard had not placed any troops within the walls of the Law Courts, having been assured that such a measure was absolutely unnecessary, and that the Parlement would be extremely flattered by this mark of confidence. But the consequence was, that we found the halls, and all the passages to them, crowded with young people, most of them attorneys' or lawyers' clerks, who received us with the most insolent clamour of hissing and hallooing. We were so surrounded, that we found some difficulty in gaining the door of the great chamber. After knocking a full quarter of an hour, without

obtaining admittance, we went to another door, accompanied by a crowd of the spectators, who laughed at our embarrassment, and their mirth increased when they saw that our attempts to enter at the second door were equally unsuccessful. We next went to the Parquet, a large room in the Palais where the King's advocates and attorneys assemble, where we found some of the Royal officials. M. de Thiard complained, with great mildness, of the incivility of the clerks belonging to the palace, and of the obstacles we found in entering. He begged the Attorney-General to give notice to the President of our arrival, and to let him know that we waited for entrance, until he should order the messenger to open the door. A quarter of an hour elapsed without our receiving any answer. We sent a second message, and at the same time M. de Thiard gave orders to the commanding officer of the regiment to send the grenadier company to the palace. We waited another quarter of an hour; after which, the Assembly being informed of the order given to the grenadier company, gave us to understand that we must send our request in writing.

Notwithstanding the irregularity of this demand, after a moment's pause, we sent the request in writing, as they required, and we went again to the door of the Grand Chamber. On our way, I was informed by a confidential person, that notice was given to all the tradesmen in town to assemble in the square of the Law Courts at three o'clock, armed with cudgels, the instruments of their professions, and in the best manner they could. He added, that very violent projects were formed. It immediately occurred to me, that one means of oversetting these projects, and the best which could be adopted in the present circumstances, would be to abridge the sitting, by having the laws registered in the short manner that registrations are made in the *lits de justice*; namely, by writing only the first and last line, and leaving a blank space between



them sufficient for inserting the whole afterwards. I proposed this matter to M. de Thiard, who approved of it, and desired me to write it down in his paper of memorandums.

The door of the Grand Chamber was at last opened to us; but M. de Thiard had previously ordered the officer of the grenadier company to oblige all strangers to withdraw, and allow none to enter afterwards. When we had taken our seats, M. de Thiard pronounced a few sentences, expressive of his regret in being forced, by the King's orders, to execute a commission which might perhaps be disagreeable to the Parliament, though he was himself ignorant of the object of it. And I immediately afterwards said, that "notwithstanding my having received the King's express commands to assist at this sitting, I was happy in having no part to perform on the present occasion, as his Majesty's Commissioner, and in being allowed the place I was entitled to in the Assembly as *maitre des requêtes* (a legal magistracy) which I would be ever proud to deserve, by my inviolable attachment to the magistracy and the laws, to which the true interest of the King could never be in opposition."

I had all M. de Thiard's papers before me, and also all the packets containing the laws to be registered; and while he was pronouncing his speech, I took that opportunity to write upon his memorandum the form of the order of registration, *by the first and last line*. After having written this for his instruction, I ostentatiously put another paper, which I held in my hand, into my pocket; and to make those who saw me writing imagine that I was only taking a note of the exact time when the seance began, I had looked at my watch the instant before I began to write. I placed all the papers, regularly numbered, before M. de Thiard, so that he could make no mistake, if he only took up the first that lay nearest his hand. I thought I had so well provided against all difficulties which might oc-

cur, that I should have nothing to do or to say in this sitting. M. de Thiard could have conducted it without difficulty, by simply adhering to his written instructions. Indeed, a person of the lowest capacity could hardly have been embarrassed; but M. de Thiard's extreme politeness carried him so much beyond the proper bounds, in the very opening of the Assembly, that I was forced, for a moment, to relinquish the passive part which I had intended to act. When he read the order of *registration by the first and last line*, there arose a slight murmur in the Assembly, which I did not inquire into the cause of; but I thought it necessary to observe, that this method of registration was constantly adopted in the *lits de justice*. Here M. de Thiard, carried away by his natural complaisance, and forgetting his instructions, very politely proposed to the Assembly to have the registration made out in the usual way, if that was more agreeable to them. Thinking it necessary to cut the matter short, I immediately said aloud, to M. de Thiard, that the Assembly could not make any reply to his proposition, because, before they did, it would be necessary that they should deliberate; but that he had already deprived them of that power by declaring the King's order, which expressly interdicted all deliberations.

M. de Thiard's incapacity for business, or at least his ignorance of forms, was now evident to the Assembly, and they endeavoured to take advantage of it. The first clerk, either of himself, or by the advice of some of the members, refused to register *by the first and last line*, and began to transcribe the whole law which had just then been pronounced. After three-quarters of an hour had elapsed, without his returning to his seat, I began to suspect what was passing, and gave M. de Thiard a hint, upon which he summoned the clerk, and asked what had detained him. He answered, that the transcription was not finished. M. de Thiard, finding that it was

not executed according to his orders, renewed his injunctions, under pain of disobedience; but this produced no effect. The clerk being again summoned, and interrogated upon the motives of his disobedience, declared that he would not execute the order, unless it was given him in writing. The form of this order was simple; but M. de Thiard, who had never written one of that kind, desired me to dictate it to him. I said to him, that he had only to write his name and titles at the head of the order which he had already pronounced. One of the members of the Parlement ardently wished that the sitting might be prolonged till the mob had time to assemble in the square of the Law Courts; and he could not forgive me the crime of having disappointed his views, by the advice which I gave M. de Thiard upon this occasion. He threw several notes out of the window, to inform the public what passed in the Assembly. One of them contained these words: "The Intendant is the cause of all the mischief. He is a monster who must be stifled." M. de Coudic was the name of the member who wrote this note. I name him, to prevent others from being suspected of so unworthy an action. The man, unfortunately, was not quite mad enough to be shut up. I say unfortunately, because in times of public fermentation it is under men of this description that the multitude arrange themselves, and are carried to the most desperate acts of violence. M. de Coudic, misled by parliamentary fanaticism, was the chief instigator of all the troubles which took place in Rennes, from which the Revolution in reality began. Immediately upon its breaking out, he became one of its most furious demagogues. He afterwards came to London, where he associated himself with some of the most seditious clubs, and where he died, after having published a furious and extravagant pamphlet against monarchical government.

All difficulties being at last surmounted, the sitting con-

tinued without further interruption, and broke up at half past twelve, to the great surprise of the public, who were just then informed, by the arrival of the courier from Nantes, that the same measure, in the Chamber of Accounts, had detained the Assembly there thirty hours; and it was known a few days after, that it had taken up nearly the same time in all the sovereign courts of the Kingdom, from its not having occurred to any of the commissioners to employ the expeditious form of registering by the first and last line.

In consequence of the order which had been given, of admitting nobody into the palace, there were few assembled at the gate, and a profound calm prevailed when we came out. M. de Thiard concluded that the same tranquillity prevailed all over the town; and he gave orders to the detachment, who waited to conduct us, to remain in the square, as we had no occasion for an escort. We were only attended by the guard of the Commandant, which consisted of about eighteen or twenty at the utmost. As long as we were in the street which goes immediately from the square, where the regiment of Rohan was stationed, the fear it inspired preserved us, thus far, from being insulted otherwise than by hissings and whistlings, accompanied by the cry of *haro* (a cry used in Normandy and Brittany, before an attack), from the people who surrounded us. M. de Thiard mistook this for the usual cry of *vive le roi*; but hardly had we turned into the street which leads to the Government House than he was undeceived; for the hisses and cries redoubled, and were followed by a shower of stones, levelled, at first, at our chairs, which were carried after us: but the attack soon became more direct, which did not, however, prevent us from moving forward in the same order. I was saluted on the head with a large stone, which would certainly have extended me motionless in the street, if it had been directed in full force against

me; but having been originally intended for M. de Thiard, his servant interposed his arm, which saved his master, and undesignedly sent the stone against me. I was for some time stunned; but when I recovered my senses, and saw the size of the stone, I was very thankful that I had come off so well. M. de Thiard's servant was incapable of using his arm for several months. The crowd now began to increase, and pressed so near us, that we were forced to precipitate our retreat in some disorder. We got into the residence of the Commandant without any further accident, a military detachment having met us near the house, and fortunately prevented the populace from overtaking us. The soldiers, however, were forced to point their bayonets, to stop some of the boldest of the multitude from bursting in; which after all, they would probably have effected, had not a young officer rushed, quite unarmed, betwixt the people and the bayonets, to prevent the effusion of blood. This generous action produced a very happy effect, by the turn it gave to the sensations of the people. In their enthusiastic admiration they seized upon the officer, raised him in their arms, with repeated acclamations of praise. That part of the mob, who were most distant from the scene, not knowing what had taken place, concluded that the officer, whom they saw elevated, was an enemy to the people; on which they began to throw stones with great fury, and the young man was slightly wounded in the forehead. When the people immediately around him saw the blood flow, they gave him all the assistance in their power, with every expression of sympathy. In short, he so completely occupied them, that the "*Cour Pleniere*" (the law courts intended to be established) and the King's Commissioners were for some time forgotten.

The capital error which M. de Thiard committed, and what immediately occasioned the insurrection, was the order he was

known to have given to the troops not to make any use of their arms, except to intimidate; for he had directed that the soldiers should put the rammers into the barrel of their firelocks in sight of the populace, to prove clearly, in case they should have harboured any suspicion of being fired upon, that no harm was intended. Having received this pledge of their security, the mob became insolent and outrageous in the highest degree, while the soldiers, on the other hand, were intimidated and passive, suffering themselves to be cuffed and kicked, and even allowing their arms to be taken from them, without attempting retaliation or resistance. In short, a party of sixty armed soldiers were so obedient to the orders of remaining passive, as tamely to allow their sentry-box to be broken in pieces by an inconsiderable mob, and they themselves to be beaten and wounded by the broken pieces of this very box.

The people were emboldened to these excesses, rather from the impunity with which they were permitted to act, than from any idea they had of their own strength. At first the disorder might have been suppressed, if M. de Thiard had given orders aloud to charge immediately, and fire upon those who did not disperse at the first warning; but most unfortunately, he thought it would be better to endeavour to overawe the people by a more considerable appearance of force; and that very night he dispatched couriers to St. Malo, with orders for fresh battalions of infantry, a few squadrons of cavalry, with some pieces of artillery, to march immediately to Rennes. This little army would certainly have been sufficient to ransack the town, and exterminate the inhabitants; but as the character of M. de Thiard was too well known for him to be suspected of having such designs, the arrival of those troops, so far from terrifying the multitude, only rendered the insurrection more general, and augmented the mortification and disgust of the soldiers, who were full of indignation at the despicable part which they had been made to act.



## CHAPTER IV.

Assemblies held in the Reading Room.—Consequences of these assemblies.—Imprudent conversations of M. de Thiard.—The danger to which I was exposed by them.—A parody of the *lit de justice* exhibited in the streets by the chimney-sweepers.—The Parlement meets.—Weak measures to separate it.—General insurrection.—Violence of the Attorney-General.—Deputation of the Parlement.—Publication of its decisions.—Conduct of the nobility, with respect to M. d'Hervilly.—Weakness of M. de Thiard.

It was particularly recommended to M. de Thiard and me, in our instructions, to prevent the Parlement from assembling in the Law Court, or elsewhere, after the registering, and a sufficient number of *lettres de cachet* were sent us to banish the members to their estates, in case we found that measure indispensably necessary. M. de Thiard informed the President of this, and assured him, that he should regret extremely if the Parlement, by infringing the King's orders, forced him upon such strong measures. The President promised him to do all that depended upon him to prevent the Parlement from meeting. Accordingly, next day, about the same hour, several members having met at his house, and M. de Thiard being informed of it, and expressing his uneasiness, the President immediately begged of the members to withdraw.

But while the Parlement gave this example of submission to the King's will, assemblies were held, night and morning, in the different Reading Rooms at Rennes, which might be looked upon as so many clubs. These were composed of citizens of every class, but chiefly of those intemperate spirits who were perpetually occupied in discussing political ques-



tions, replacing the means of insurrection, and in corrupting or intimidating the soldiers, etc. These fire-brands of sedition required to be the more strictly attended to, as it was easy to perceive that their design was to force the members of the Parlement to assemble, as the only means by which they could screen themselves from the reproach of cowardice, and from the insults of the populace. This happened, accordingly, a few days after, as I had foretold M. de Thiard, who unfortunately would not believe me; yet he was continually saying that, for his own part, he understood nothing of business; and he did not scruple to add, that it was the Intendant who directed every thing. There was more truth in the first of these assertions than in the second; our characters were too opposite for my advice to suit him, and accordingly he seldom followed it. But his discourse, which was circulated in the town, increased the discontent against me and the danger to which I was exposed, as appeared by some very violent libels which were published against me. I was even threatened with assassination, which, indeed, might easily have been executed, as it was known that I went every evening to M. de Thiard's, and always returned home about the same hour, attended by one servant only. But happily France was not then so much familiarised with assassination as it has been since; and notwithstanding the cautions which I frequently received to avoid one particular corner of a street, and not to pass through another, I never was under the necessity of making use of the pistols which it was known I always carried in my pocket. But I was assured, indeed, that on one occasion a woman had prevented her son from firing a musket at me from her window.

The military officers were not received in any family in town; and there never passed a day in which some of the soldiers were not attacked or beaten. We were not much more

respected ourselves. We seldom appeared in the streets without hearing very disagreeable comments passed upon us. To these M. de Thiard always returned a gracious smile, which the populace (not comprehending its refined delicacy) imputed to affectation, or took for a sign of fear. This custom of overlooking every attempt which was made against royal authority, and the license which was given to degrade and insult the persons employed to support it, inspired the leaders of the insurrection with the highest degree of insolence. A farce was acted in the squares and public streets, particularly under the windows of the Commandant and the Intendant, which was designed as a burlesque on the *lits de justice*, the last session of the Parlement, and some of the new laws. This piece was performed by shoe-blacks and chimney-sweepers, dressed in tattered black robes, square caps, and paper cravats, and seated on the little stools which those blackguards brought for the occasion, giving, as it was said, an exact representation of the scheme of putting the Judge on a level with the judged. Printed papers, giving an account of all that passed at this royal sitting of shoe-blacks, were distributed with profusion among the populace. These papers contained also the speeches which the actors in this farce were supposed to have pronounced, but which the loud applause and mirth of the immense crowds which followed them prevented from being heard.

M. de Thiard, who dined with me that day, happened to arrive while this entertainment was going forward under my window. The idea appeared to him very amusing; and he endeavoured to make me laugh at some of the sarcasms contained in a picce, where we were both made to act the lowest and most indecent parts. I could not help saying to him, with some degree of spleen, "that if this farce had been acted in Constantinople, and I had read the account of it in

the Gazette, I might perhaps have been as much inclined to laugh as he was; but that it was impossible for me to find any amusement in seeing the King's authority so scandalously degraded." This was the case already, to such a degree, that the spirit of revolt infected every class. The Parlement, which had till then given an example of submission to his Majesty's orders, was loudly accused of having sold itself to the Court, and was in a manner compelled, by circumstances, to infringe the interdiction against assembling.

The guard, which was placed at the Law Courts, having orders to let nobody enter, the magistrates chose, as a place of meeting, the house of one of the Presidents, situated opposite to the Intendant's residence. The Assembly met at five o'clock in the morning. As soon as M. de Thiard was informed of this, he sent a detachment of the regiment of Rohan, and charged the officer who commanded to order the Parlement, in the King's name, to separate immediately. But the doors were barricaded. After knocking several times, without being answered, the officer contented himself with keeping the house blockaded, as he had no orders to force it open. As soon as it was known in the town that the Parlement was assembled and besieged in the "*Hotel de Cuillé*," the people gathered in crowds to protect the magistrates. A great many gentlemen came with their swords, and unfortunately their discourse and their example encouraged the people to insult the troops in the grossest manner. The Attorney-General himself, who arrived at that moment, in his robes, to join the Assembly, had the imprudence to call the soldiers "vile satellites of despotism," and to threaten to deliver them up to the fury of the people. My advice had not been asked in any of these measures. I did not understand what had occasioned the tumult, nor the meaning of the clamours I heard while in my closet. At nine o'clock in the morning I received a note from

M. de Thiard, in which he desired me to go to him. I sent him for answer, "that the mob was at my door, and that I could not go out, without exposing myself to be massacred; that I did not think I ought to run such a risk without an absolute necessity: it was therefore expedient we should communicate by writing." He immediately wrote me a second note, in which he gave me to understand, that the King's service absolutely exacted of me to go to him as soon as possible, in order to consult and determine upon the measures which were to be taken; and that he had sent an escort to accompany me. This escort, composed of eight soldiers and an officer, was more fit to expose me to observation, and consequently to insult, than to protect me against such a crowd of assailants, whom the known benignity of M. de Thiard's orders had taught to face the soldiers without fear, however great their number. In yielding to the requisition of M. de Thiard, I thought it would be prudent to supply the want of proper protection by stratagem; I therefore made the eight soldiers be placed without the great gate of my house, as if they had been sent there to defend the entry. I agreed with the officer that I should go out by a small door, and as soon as he saw me pass, he was to put himself in motion with the soldiers, and follow me at about the distance of forty paces. I also had the precaution not to appear in the black robe, or with long dressed hair, as I had hitherto always done. My stratagem succeeded perfectly at first. I passed within ten paces of the mob, without attracting any attention. They were entirely occupied by a detachment of dragoons, who came to support the siege or blockade of the "*Hotel de Cuillé*," and who, instead of marching against the mob, whom they might have dispersed in a twinkling, formally drew themselves up according to the orders of M. de Thiard, and stood peaceable spectators in the walk which overlooks that part of the town.

A few moments afterwards I met a dragoon, who, in galloping to join the detachment, chased before him all the people that were in the street. Twenty-five dragoons, I am convinced, by a brisk charge, would have been sufficient to put all the inhabitants of the town to flight.

When I arrived at the top of the street which leads to the Commandant's hotel, I saw, at the gate, a mob, consisting of about two thousand people, through which it was absolutely necessary for me to pass. I had not gone far into the street when I was discovered; and immediately there was a general shout of "*haro*, against the Intendant," accompanied with the most furious imprecations. I did not hesitate respecting the part I had to take. To have retreated would have been as mean as unsafe; and it appeared to me, that my only resource was to endeavour to overawe them by an intrepid countenance. I imperceptibly relaxed my pace, to give the officer, who followed me, time to come nearer me. I rejected his proposal, however, of placing me in the midst of the escort, directing him to continue to follow, but to keep nearer, and to order his men to walk firm and erect. I myself, in the meantime, continued my pace with as undaunted an air as I could assume, in spite of the cries of *haro*, which redoubled with violence as we approached. When we had got within ten paces of this mob, who were armed with sticks and stones, I put my hands into my pockets, to make them believe that I was provided with pistols. I advanced, fixing the boldest of them with a steady eye, and walked straight forward betwixt the crowd and the wall of the hotel, as if the street had been quite clear. It became so for me. At this critical moment the shouts ceased at once, as if an order had been issued for that purpose, the crowd opened to the right and left as I advanced, and I entered M. de Thiard's hotel without any one having dared to throw a stone at me, or to insult me in any way.

I was hardly entered, when the cry of *haro* was renewed with fresh vigour, in spite of a body of fifty dragoons who stood at the gate, like so many equestrian statues. They were looked upon so much in that light, that amongst those who surrounded them there were people bold enough to pass under the horses, and cut the girths of two or three saddles.

I found M. de Thiard calmly conversing with some officers, not knowing any thing of what passed at his gate, nor comprehending the meaning of the shouts he heard. I said to him, with some heat, that he ought to know, better than me, the cause of the clamour; that it was the consequence of a general insurrection, which existed since six in the morning, and had been excited by a measure, in which, as he well knew, I had no part, since he had given orders without saying a word to me. He excused himself, by saying that he did not think it necessary to disturb me, because he had never doubted but that the Parlement would separate as soon as the troops arrived. He then consulted me upon what was to be done. "That is what you ought to find in your instructions," said I to him; "it is for you to consider whether you will follow them or not. When you have decided upon that point, I will give you my advice upon the means of executing them."

"You know, then," said he, "what my instructions are."

"Yes, undoubtedly; but I am uncertain how far you intend to follow them."

"I wish the Parlement to separate," said he.

"I am convinced you do," replied I; "but at present the question is not, what you wish the Parlement to do, but what you will do yourself. You have the means in your power of doing what you please."

"But what do *you* think ought to be done with respect to the Parlement?" resumed he.

"I think there is nothing to be done at present," answered



I; "because it is more than probable that the object of their assembling is already fulfilled; and if I were in your place, I would send orders immediately for the troops to withdraw."

"What, even before the Parlement has separated?"

"Yes, without doubt; unless you have ordered the troops to attend, merely by way of doing honour to the Parlement, in a state of disobedience to the King's orders."

"I ordered the troops on purpose to make the Assembly separate," answered he.

"You ought, then," said I, "to have ordered them to force the door, when it was refused to be opened, and even to pull down the house, if necessary."

"Oh, I know very well that you are always for the most violent means," said he.

"No," replied I, "certainly I am not; for I think, on the contrary, that violent measures ought never to be had resource to, till every moderate remedy has been tried in vain; but I am for acting consistently; and nothing can be more inconsistent and more hurtful than to exhibit powerful means, and then to act with weakness."

"It would be acting in a very weak manner," replied he, "to withdraw the troops at present; and I cannot see any inconvenience in their remaining for some time longer."

"You will decide as you please."

We were engaged in this conversation, when a deputation from the Parlement was announced. M. de Thiard went into his drawing-room, and I remained in his chamber, from which I heard the Attorney-General complain to him, in a very outrageous and indecent style, of an insult which he pretended to have received from the officer who commanded the dragoons. This officer, in conformity with the orders which he had received to admit nobody, had for some moments opposed the entrance of the deputies. The Attorney-General was deaf to



all expostulation. His colleagues in vain endeavoured to bring him to a more decent behaviour: he imperiously insisted on having justice done him against the officer, whom M. de Thiard had the complaisance to order under arrest.

The object of this deputation was to demand that the troops, which were stationed at the gate of the "*Hotel de Cuillé,*" should be recalled, to put an end to the scandal and disorder which resulted from that measure. Before he gave them any answer, M. de Thiard thought proper to come and consult me, by which, without intending it, he did me a very ill office; for it confirmed them in the notion that I was the instigator of the measure I complained of. I told M. de Thiard that I had already advised him to do what was now demanded of him, and that I had not altered my opinion. He then consented to the recall of the troops. He made it a condition, that the Parlement should separate as soon as possible; but the deputies not being authorized to stipulate for the Assembly, could only promise that they would use their utmost efforts to prevail upon them to do so.

The Assembly continued till five o'clock in the afternoon: at the same hour the protest, which the Parlement had taken against the edicts lately registered, was published, and distributed all over the town with great profusion. We were at the same time informed, that there had been warm debates in the Assembly, on this question, Whether there were not grounds for decreeing, that the King's Commissioners should be taken into custody? and it was carried in the negative, by a very small majority.

In consequence of this conduct, the Parlement was immediately sent into exile. The *lettres de cachet* were delivered, the following evening, against all the members, except M. du Coudic, who, having seen the preceding day that to elude the execution of the King's orders, all that was necessary was to

shut himself up in his chamber, and keep it fast locked, had recourse to this expedient, and with nearly equal success, with the Parlement; for having shut himself up, and refused admittance to the officer who came with the *lettre de cachet*, and threatened to shoot any person who dared to force open his door, M. de Thiard thought it sufficient to place two sentinels in his antechamber, who passed two days there; which did not prevent M. du Coudic making his escape out of the window, getting clear of the town, and traversing the Province, without having the King's order notified to him.

The ineffectual measure of exiling the Parlement so far from restoring tranquillity, only served to irritate the public more and more, and to augment the fermentation. The meetings at the Reading Rooms were permanent. The most violent measures were the constant object of their deliberations. It was decreed, in one of these assemblies, that all the gentlemen of Rennes should demand, in a body, satisfaction of M. d'Hervilly, colonel of the regiment of Rohan, for the insult he was supposed to have offered to the nobility in the person of one of its members, against whom he was accused of having raised his cane. The fact was, that during the blockade of the "*Hotel de Cuillé*," M. d'Hervilly, who was there with the detachment of his regiment, was brutally assaulted by some gentlemen, who, after having torn off his epaulets, pushed him rudely against the wall; at that moment he suddenly raised his arm to defend his head; but he could not raise his arm, without also raising the cane which he held in his hand. It was this involuntary motion which was misinterpreted as an insulting gesture. M. d'Hervilly gave this explanation to a numerous deputation, who came to inform him of the intentions of the nobility. As his explanation did not satisfy them, he accepted, with gratitude, the honourable challenge that was proposed to him; but he told these gentlemen, that

he must limit its execution to three duels a day, upon account of the time he was obliged to bestow on the King's service. The manner in which the first duel passed very happily terminated this quarrel. M. d'Hervilly having given his adversary his life three times, that gentleman rather chose to embrace him, than to continue the combat; and the two others, who were to have fought M. d'Hervilly on the same day, declared themselves satisfied; as did all the other gentlemen who were to have fought him afterwards.

This affair opened M. de Thiard's eyes to the danger of these assemblies which were held in the town, and he consulted me upon the means of putting a stop to them. My opinion was, that at the point to which things had arrived, success could only be expected from the most vigorous measures; and that with respect to these assemblies, I saw no other means than to publish, and rigorously execute, a decree, by which all assemblies whatever were interdicted, under pain of a penalty of 3,000 livres, of confiscation, and the demolition of the house in which the assemblies should be held. He at first approved of my advice, and begged of me to draw up the decree, and make it be printed and published. This was done in the course of the day; but the next morning he had changed his mind, upon hearing of M. d'Hervilly's reconciliation with the nobility, because he looked upon the measure as quite unnecessary; and in spite of my earnest expostulations, he never could resolve upon publishing this decree, the execution of which might probably have stopped the progress of the revolt and the general disorder.

CHAPTER V.

Progress of the insurrection.—Insolence of a barrister.—Representations of the Standing Commission of the Estates of Brittany.—Violent conduct of the Archbishop of Sens.—Decrees of the Council.—Tumults.—Weakness of M. de Thiard.—Designs formed against me.—My departure for Paris.—Its consequences.—M. de Thiard's recall.—Replaced by M. de Stainville.—Retirement of the Archbishop of Sens and of M. de Lamoignon.—Recall of M. Necker.—M. de Barentin appointed chancellor.—M. Necker prepares the convocation of the States-General.—His motives.

THE establishment of the baillage at Rennes was become absolutely impossible, from the contempt into which Royal authority had fallen, from the protest of the Parlement against the new laws, and from the inefficacy of all means of force in the hands of a commandant such as M. de Thiard. My correspondence with the Ministers, and principally with the Archbishop of Sens, turned upon the necessity of qualifying his measures, of abandoning his miserable new system of Law Courts, and, above all, of suspending the execution of the new laws in Brittany, until such time as they should receive the approbation of the States, according to the privileges of that province, and the engagement which the King renewed at every sitting, never to make any attempt against them. The Archbishop's answers were always laconic, and to a ridiculous height imperious; as for instance, "*The King will be obeyed. — The King knows how to make himself obeyed. — You will immediately receive such orders as the circumstances require.*" But a disregard of subordination and the spirit of revolt were so rapid, and these orders were dispatched so slowly, that we

always received them about a fortnight after the period in which they might have been of service.

The enthusiasm of insurrection had so heated every mind, and the disorder and weakness of government were so apparent, that those who, from motives of interest as well as duty, ought to have been its surest support, gloried in showing themselves the most eager in attacking it. Thus, while the Standing Commission of the States addressed the most insolent expostulations to the King against the new edicts, and while the legal officer of the States traveled past over the municipalities of the province, to foree them to take a protest against his Majesty's orders, under pain of incurring the censure of the States and the Parlement, the King's Attorney-General threatened to prosecute us if we did not set at liberty a seditious fellow, who had been taken up before the *Hotel de Cuillé*. This fellow was at the head of a mob, exciting the people against the soldiers. A pistol and ammunition were found in his pockets. The Attorney-General insisted, that if the man was liable to be tried, it belonged to him, and not to us, to prosecute him. M. de Thiard saw no impropriety in delivering up the fellow to the jurisdiction of the Attorney-General, in spite of my remonstrances against such a measure; and after a slight examination, this vagabond was set at liberty, as was to have been expected, amidst the acclamations of the populace, who conducted him home in triumph. It was even thought necessary to give him a few louis d'ors, to prevent his raising a process against us for damages, in which he would certainly have been successful.

The Archbishop of Sens, confident in the resources of his own genius, and persuaded that his measures would be crowned with success, regarded the opposition in Brittany with contemptuous indifference; seeing that the greatest number of the

baillages<sup>1</sup> were established, and in activity, he thought that it would be in his power to restore that province to tranquillity when he pleased. He was, however, stung to the quick at the disrespectful style in which he and his measures were mentioned in the representations addressed to the King by the Standing Commission of the States, and he revenged himself by ordering twelve gentlemen of Brittany, several of whom had taken no part in the troubles which agitated that province, to be arrested, and conducted to the Bastille. He sent us, at the same time, a decree of the Council, with a dull and tedious preamble, the object of which was, to refute the principal objections that were raised against the new laws. We were ordered to publish and circulate it in all the principal towns of the province, without delay; and this order was punctually executed. I told M. de Thiard, that I should cause the decree to be posted up next morning, but that we must expect to have it immediately torn down, unless there was a guard stationed by every placard; and that an insurrection might very possibly be the consequence. "We shall see," replied he, with great composure, and accordingly it was what we did see. The placards, which were posted up at four o'clock in the morning, were all taken down by the populace, an immense crowd of whom had assembled for the purpose of making a bonfire with them in the court of my residence; but thanks to the firmness of my porter, and the solidity of my gate, the

<sup>1</sup> The Baillages and Sénéchausses (the two terms being practically synonymous) were administrative divisions of the country. Each also possessed Courts of Justice, which had fallen somewhat into disquietude, but which Cardinal Loménie de Brienne in his abortive scheme of substituting the "Cour Plenière" for the existing Parlements proposed to revive with increased jurisdiction and powers. (See Note on the Cour Plenière, Vol. I., 46.)

The Baillages and Sénéchausses formed the constituencies or electoral districts for the States-General in 1788-89.

bonfire was not allowed to be kindled within the court, but only in the street before the house; and I sustained no other loss than having a few of my windows broken by the stones thrown by the mob. I immediately dispatched one of my clerks to M. de Thiard, to give him an account of what was passing; and about two hours after, when the mob was entirely dispersed, he sent me a few dragoons, and a guard of twenty men, whom I dismissed immediately, being convinced that my showing any symptoms of fear, or that I thought myself in danger, would be an infallible way of bringing the danger on. The people were accustomed to see a number of troops at the residence of the Commandant, but never at that of the Intendant. The novelty of this alone would have attracted a crowd; and when that had become great, a few seditious fellows might have excited them to insurrection.

The fermentation, occasioned by the exile of the magistrates, was considerably augmented by the confinement of the twelve gentlemen; and the intelligence which was given me by the Sieur Tronjolly, Public Prosecutor at the Police Court, prepared us to expect a very serious explosion. The project of retaliating upon us for those acts of despotism was publicly talked of; and I have no doubt but that the trifling insurrection, occasioned by the posting up of the placards, would have been more serious, had it been less sudden, and if more time had been given for the instigators to make preparations. They expected a new opportunity, which they hoped to improve to more advantage; because the seditious gained strength daily by the accession of crowds of vagabonds, who having suffered under, or fled from, the lash of justice, flocked to Rennes from all quarters, some having been invited by the seditious, others attracted by the disorders that reigned at that place.

M. de Thiard, who had received information of all that was going forward, added a hundred men to the guard of his resi-



dence, and obliged me to pass a night there. He earnestly intreated me to remain with him till the end of our mission. This would certainly have been the safest plan; but the idea of taking refuge, and concealing myself, was so repugnant to my character, that I could not consent to it. I returned to the Intendant's house next day, to which M. de Thiard sent a guard of twenty men. I wrote, the same day, to the Archbishop of Sens, and to the Chancellor, informing them, that in the present situation of affairs, the execution of the new laws was impracticable in Brittany; that our presence was ineffectual for the end proposed, and could serve no purpose but to lower the King's authority, as it was not in our power to punish the insults daily offered to us, neither could I secure myself from the danger which menaced me in particular; therefore I requested permission to return; adding, that I would wait for it, unless the danger became very urgent.

Eight days had elapsed without my receiving any answer to these letters, when I was informed, by the public Prosecutor of the police, that my house would be attacked by a considerable mob, made up of the greatest vagabonds in Rennes; that they intended to enter by the garden wall, which was low enough for that purpose on the side next the street. Their design was to seize upon my person. My informant refused to mention the treatment which was intended me; he only advised me not to remain any longer in my house, as it was impossible to know how soon this attack would be made. On the same day, namely, the 7 July, I received the same advice from one Bouvard, who commanded the city guard at Rennes. I did not, however, follow it, but continued in the house; I only had the precaution to quit the chamber in which I usually slept, as it was on a level with the garden, and I went to a small apartment on the second floor, where they would not probably have thought of seeking me, and from

which I could more easily have made my escape, had I been reduced to that extremity.

I was not long in knowing that the intelligence I had received was but too well founded. On the 8 July, about two o'clock in the morning, the guard stationed in my garden perceived two men, who had clambered over the wall; but these fellows, observing that they were discovered, had time to make their escape before the guard could come up with them; and they were seen running along the street with eight or ten of their companions, who had undoubtedly come to reconnoitre the ground. This attempt determined me to leave Rennes next day, although I had not received permission, and although M. de Thiard offered to send me a more numerous guard. I answered him, that in order to re-establish and maintain the King's authority, it was not sufficient that we possessed the means of repelling such attacks as these, but that we ought also to have the power and the firmness to punish the authors with exemplary severity; and that I could by no means consent to remain exposed to the danger of being attacked in my house, unless he would give positive and unlimited orders to the troops to repel force by force; and likewise give me his word of honour that he would deliver up every person, seized in the act of assault, to be tried and executed if condemned. This proposal terrified him so much, that he thought it better for me to set off, and inform the Ministers of what was passing. I accordingly left Rennes secretly on the 9 July, at three o'clock in the morning, accompanied by eight dragoons, who escorted me half a league out of town; and I arrived at Versailles on the 11th, at five in the afternoon. I alighted at the Archbishop of Sens' house. He was surprised to see me, and received me coldly enough. "You were in a great hurry to come," said he. "Did not you receive my letter?"

“No, my lord.”

“If you had waited for it, you would then have known that it was the King’s intention that you should visit the principal towns of the province, in order to judge of the general disposition with respect to the new laws, and to give us an account of it. I confess,” continued he, “that after the idea which M. de Montmorin gave me of your character, particularly of your firmness, I did not expect such a falling off on your part. None of your colleagues have done the same in any part of the Kingdom.”

“None of them,” I replied, “have found things in the same state that I did. I shall only say, my lord, that I never was considered as faint-hearted; and you will find that I have not left that reputation in Brittany; and I would have been there still, if my firmness alone could have answered any purpose. With respect to the journey which the King wished me to take through the principal towns of the province, that is quite unnecessary to the end of knowing the people’s dispositions. I am perfectly well informed on that subject, by constant correspondence with my delegates; and I can venture to assure you, that there will be no difficulty in establishing the new laws all over the province, after they are received at Rennes, but not before.”

“Yes, but at Rennes, things go on very ill; and the King is greatly dissatisfied.”

“I am very sorry for it, but it is no fault of mine. I was very exact in declaring my opinion respecting what was likely to happen, and I mentioned what measures would have been most expedient during the existing circumstances. I am convinced that what I proposed would then have been effectual; but now it would be too late.”

“You surely had troops in abundance?”

“A great deal too many. I never complained that we had

not soldiers enough; decisive orders were what we most stood in need of."

"What do you mean? Did not the King give a free hand to M. de Thiard?"

"He never told me so. The instructions which I saw were not to that effect."

"But what do you think ought to be done at present?"

"If it be the King's intentions to have the new laws put in execution, M. de Thiard should receive positive instructions to that purpose, and be required, at the same time, to mention what means he thinks will be necessary to secure success, and furnish what he requires. But, above all, his instructions must be positive."

To this the Archbishop answered, "It is not possible to foresee every circumstance. But, in short, there can be no inconvenience in allowing a few days to pass, till we see what effect your departure will produce. Go now to the Chancellor, and return and see me as soon as you receive news from Brittany."

M. de Lamoignon received me still worse than the Archbishop of Sens. He severely reproached me for having sent my resignation, and for having left Rennes without having obtained the King's permission. I completely satisfied him with regard to the necessity of setting out, without waiting for leave; and with regard to my sending in my resignation, I reminded him of what had passed between us before I left Paris, upon the impossibility of my accepting any commission that would oblige me to act against the Parlement; and it was easy for me to prove to him, that my conduct was the necessary consequence of the error I had been led into by his answer. I complained, in my turn, not of the reserve, but of the dissimulation with which I had been treated. "It appears to me," said I to him, "that without initiating me in the secret of the projected measure, I might at least have got a

general hint that it concerned the magistracy and the administration of justice; if I had, I should then have endeavoured to convince the Archbishop of the danger of attempting such a measure in Brittany, before the approaching convocation of the States. It should be left to this decision; as in this way alone could it be reconciled to the privileges of that province, all of which the King had engaged to maintain: and this was likewise the only way to secure the success of the measure itself; whereas, the resistance with which it would be met in Brittany, would give the example of opposition, and encourage the other provinces to resist. The proper plans to have adopted," I added, "had been traced by M. de Maupeou, in a much more important and difficult enterprise. If they had adopted it, the result would have been the same in Brittany, by employing M. de Reverseau to transact business with the Parlement, instead of sending him to the Exchequer Court at Nantes, where I could have more properly fulfilled the commission with which he was charged."

"All this," replied M. de Lamoignon, "is like mustard after dinner; and I am certain that the King will be very much astonished and displeased, when he knows that you are here."

"If his Majesty," said I, "were acquainted with my character, he would be, on the contrary, surprised at my supporting, during two long months, the contradictions and disgusts which I met with. I am good for nothing in such a conjuncture; and I would give in my resignation a thousand times, rather than be placed in the same circumstances again."

"I do not positively say," replied he, "that the King is determined upon your return to Brittany. We shall see. But you have brought yourself into a very disagreeable situation."

"I could not avoid it: but that which I have quitted was the worst of all situations."

"You are extremely obstinate."

“ Perhaps I am, sir; and particularly when I think myself in the right, and have nothing to reproach myself with.”

He then desired that I should immediately make out a circumstantial statement of the affairs in Brittany, which he would next day lay before the council; and so we separated, mutually dissatisfied with each other. I drew up the statement, as he desired, and gave it him next morning. I found him rather softened, because M. de Montmorin, whom I had seen in the interval, had spoken to him in my favour, and had convinced him of the injustice of blaming me for the ill success of their measures, since the only means which could have insured it had not been under my direction. And surely it was no fault of mine that M. de Thiard only employed the troops in the defence of his own house, and appeared to confine his whole care and attention to the single object of securing it from being taken by assault.

By the first messenger from Brittany intelligence was brought, that on the very day which I left Rennes, a mob had assembled, and erected a gibbet before the house in which I had lodged; that upon this I had been hanged in effigy; and the figure representing me was afterwards burned in a large bonfire made for the purpose. This same figure was previously covered with inscriptions of the most insolent and seditious nature. This ceremony had continued a considerable time, during which many execrations were uttered against the Minister, as well as against M. de Thiard and myself, and no interruption was attempted by the troops or otherwise, nor was any measure adopted for arresting the actors or instigators, though they were well known.

The weakness of M. de Thiard was such that the Archbishop of Sens at last became sensible that there was an absolute necessity for sending a man more capable of commanding into



Brittany. The Maréchal de Stainville, who was then at Strasbourg, was sent for. It was hardly possible to make a better choice. He arrived at Rennes with the same orders and the same powers which had been given to M. de Thiard, whom he went to replace. He had only passed two days there, when subordination and tranquillity were perfectly re-established, without a shot being fired, or a blow struck; because it was known that the arms were charged, and that the troops had received orders, not only to repel force by force, but to fire upon the most inconsiderable mob who refused to disperse. So true it is, that in order to restrain the people, it is absolutely necessary to appear not to fear them; and that a number of troops do not overawe the multitude so much as the known firmness of him who commands them.

But while order was beginning to be restored in Brittany, the Archbishop of Sens entirely destroyed the King's authority all over the Kingdom; sometimes from his neglecting to employ it when it was necessary; and at other times, from his extravagant abuse of it. At length, when the finances, and public credit, and every resource were exhausted, the general disorder of the Government forced him to abandon the ministry, and shamefully seek that asylum in a foreign country which the public indignation did not permit him to find in his own.

The public mind was now turned to M. Necker, as the only man who was capable, by his supposed talents and virtues, of repairing the bad effects of the vices and incapacity of the Archbishop of Sens. Thus the King was reduced and compelled by public opinion, by the imperious cry of the nation, to recall to his council the insolent Minister whom he had, with so much satisfaction, sent away.

To abandon the measures of the Archbishop of Sens, and to recall the Parlements were the first acts of M. Necker's ad-



ministration. The retreat of M. de Lamoignon soon succeeded that of the principal minister; and M. de Barentin,<sup>2</sup> then first president of the "*Cour des Aides*" of Paris, was named chancellor. M. Necker proposed this gentleman, in the hopes of finding in him that blind and servile docility which the Archbishop of Sens had found in M. de Lamoignon; but the conduct of M. de Barentin proved him to be a man of too much worth, and too much attached to the King, ever to be swayed by M. Necker, to neglect his duty to his Majesty, or to forget what he owed to his own character.

The Archbishop of Sens had unfortunately prevailed upon the King to come under the most solemn engagement to convene the States-General in 1789; and to complete his folly, he issued a decree of the Council, authorizing, and even inviting, all who thought themselves capable of publishing, for the instruction of the Government, their ideas on the best form of convoking the States-General, the manner in which the Assembly should be composed, and the objects they should take into consideration; as if there never had been an assembly of the States in France before, or rather, as if the motive of their convocation had been to establish an entire new form of government. And, in effect, this was the aim of the greatest part of those pamphlets with which France at this time overflowed.

It might have easily been foreseen, that an assembly of the States-General, convened in that state of enthusiasm and convulsion, so far from producing any good effect, would necessarily expose the Monarchy and the King to the most imminent

<sup>2</sup> Charles Louis François de Barentin remained in office as *Garde du Sceaux*, from the 19th September 1788, to the 3rd August 1789, when he resigned in consequence of the attack of Mirabeau, who accused him of influencing the King against the National Assembly.

He emigrated shortly afterwards; returning to France during the Consulate he lived privately until the Restoration, when he received the title of Honorary Chancellor of France. He died at the age of 80, in May 1819.

danger. It is impossible to suppose that M. Necker did not foresee these consequences, without supposing him uncommonly deficient in point of discernment: and if, foreseeing them, he resolved to meet them, he acted with the presumption of a madman, or the perfidy of a traitor. Had his intentions been upright, and had he possessed the one-half of the talents which his flatterers imputed to him, the re-establishment of the finances would, as he said himself, have been a mere amusement to him, without the assistance of the States-General. The enthusiastic confidence of the public, in his talents and probity, gave him the power of deferring the convocation as long as he pleased. But more ambitious of power, than sensible to the glory of ensuring the safety of the State, the only advantage which he endeavoured to derive from the circumstance was to fix his popularity on so firm a basis, as would confirm him in administration, independent of the intrigues of the Court, and even in spite of the will of the King. His credulous vanity led him to believe that he should become the perpetual Minister of the nation, by the great addition of character he would acquire in the display of his talents before the States-General; and this chimera made him hasten the convocation.

In this manner M. Necker became one of the first springs of that Revolution, of which he was soon to be the shameful victim.

## CHAPTER VI.

Remarkable determination of the municipality of Rennes.—Representations upon the necessity of annulling it.—The other municipalities of the province imitate that of Rennes.—I give in my resignation.—Opening of the States of Brittany.—Insurrection against the nobility.—Separation of the States.—Opening of the States General.—Proposal of the Breton Club to M. Necker, rejected.—Debates upon the verification of rights.—Motives for dissolving the States General.—Plan proposed for this purpose approved of, but not followed.—Declaration of the 23d of June.

THE States of Brittany were to be assembled at the end of the month of December, 1788; and from the dissensions which still continued to agitate the province, it was easy to foresee that this assembly would be turbulent, unless the Government displayed uncommon energy, and sent another commandant than M. de Thiard. With respect to myself, I was determined against going, because it appeared to me prejudicial to the King's authority, and unbecoming my character, to return to Rennes, before public reparation was made for the insults I had received there; and also because M. Necker knew that on the first year of my Intendantship of Brittany, I had prompted the Attorney-General to denounce to the Parlement his book upon finance. I could not, therefore, expect to obtain from him that unlimited confidence, without which an Intendant cannot do much good in his province, however high his abilities and upright his intentions may be.

In hopes that the Government would come to a definite resolution relative to M. de Thiard and myself, I continued to fulfil the duties of my office with as much assiduity as if I had no idea of quitting it. At this time the municipality of Rennes

came to a resolution, by which its deputies to the States of Brittany were interdicted from deliberating upon the demands of the King, or on any affair whatever, until the third order had obtained justice from the two other orders, upon the affair of the extraordinary *fouages*, which had been brought on the tapis at the preceding meeting of the States, and had occasioned the most violent debates.

The ordinary *fouages* were amongst the most ancient taxes imposed on the lands of peasants in Brittany, at a certain rate for each fire-place existing when this imposition was fixed; but all additional fire-places, established posterior to the first imposition, were to be free from this tax. The extraordinary *fouages* were different, being originally a loan exacted from those very peasants by the States of the province, for the general expenses of the province, on the express condition that the sum advanced was to be repaid, with the interest, at the end of the year. But this condition, instead of being adhered to, was quite neglected; and the same loan was renewed and exacted, by the authority of the States, at every following sitting, and in time became a permanent tax, under the name of *fouages extraordinaires*, without any formal law.

But in proportion as the reclamation of the third order was just, the municipality of Rennes was inexcusable, in supporting it by means so irregular and so imperious; for the determination which had been issued could have no other effect than that of irritating the nobility, and raising the people to insurrection against them. The day on which I received this determination from Rennes, I showed M. Necker the plan of a decree of the Council, by which the determination of the municipality should be annulled, and all the other municipalities of the Kingdom should be interdicted from making such decrees, under pain of being dissolved. I insisted, in the most earnest manner, upon the necessity of sending this decree

immediately to Rennes by a courier extraordinary, as a means to prevent the approaching opening of the States from becoming the commencement of a civil war. M. Necker answered, with the greatest coolness, that he could not take upon him to adopt a measure of such importance, without the approbation of the King and the Ministers; and that he would speak of it at the Committee which was to be held that evening. I returned to his house next day, and found that he had set out for Paris, without having given any orders in his office relative to the proposed decree of the Council. He was to return to Versailles to dinner, and I waited for him, in vain, till seven o'clock in the evening. I engaged M. de Thiard, who was of the Assembly of Notables, to watch the moment of M. Necker's return, and to join his entreaties to mine. I put into his hands a memorial upon this affair, and a letter for M. Necker, whom I went to Paris in search of. I found him setting out for Versailles, and I followed him back, but without being able to see him on my arrival at Versailles. Five days elapsed, and neither M. de Thiard nor I could obtain a definite answer. I then wrote to him, that the decree of the Council, which I had proposed, would now be ineffectual, as time had been given for the municipalities of the province to issue determinations of the same kind with that of the municipality of Rennes, which I did not doubt of their having done; and therefore the proper measure now would be to make a new decree of the Council, for annulling, not only the determination of the municipality of Rennes, but the determinations of all the municipalities of Brittany that had the same tendency. M. Necker did not answer this letter; and I learnt at his office, that my fears appeared to him groundless, and the measures I proposed much too violent.

Some time after, the report of my intention to resign being spread in the province, several municipalities sent depu-

ties to Paris, who were commissioned to do every thing in their power to dissuade me from that step, and to use their influence with the Ministers not to accept my resignation, if I should give it in. This deputation, which, in other circumstances, would have been extremely flattering to me, now rendered my resignation indispensable; because it was known that the representations made to the King, on the injustice of the *fouages extraordinaires* went originally from me, and I was considered as the chief promoter of the opposition made by the Tiers to that tax. Of course it might have supposed, when I set off for Brittany, that I intended to put myself at the head of the Third Order, in opposition to that of the nobility: and as such conduct would not have been in any respect suitable for me, I did not choose to be suspected of it; therefore I gave in my resignation the 6 December 1788, and M. du Faure de Rochefort was named in my place.

The States of Brittany were now to be opened. All the municipalities of the province had given their deputies a positive order to take no part in any deliberation, until the affair of the extraordinary *fouages* was terminated; and they were also commissioned to exact, as a preliminary condition to every arrangement, the total restitution, capital and interest, of the amount of all the contributions paid since the year 1641, under the title of *fouages extraordinaires*, which would have amounted to at least forty millions of livres (francs) to be restored to contributors. In a court of equity, this could not have occasioned any hesitation. The Council appeared to give a tacit approbation to these determinations and mandates, by refusing to pronounce their repeal. The Third Order, therefore, naturally imagining that the Court would support their pretensions, prepared to insist upon them with renewed firmness. The imprudent conduct of the nobility, in these critical circumstances, completed the general disgust. The Count de

Boisgelin, who was to preside, arrived at Rennes two days before the opening of the States. He assembled, at his house, all the nobility who came to Rennes upon the occasion, and made this irregular assembly adopt the resolution of paying no attention to the particular demands of the Third Order, until the general affairs of the province were terminated.

The discontent which this decision excited was a prelude to the tragical catastrophe which was to signalise the opening of the States. From the second sitting, the most violent animosity appeared betwixt the order of the nobility and the Third Order. Tumult and insurrection were the consequences. It was not to be expected that M. de Thiard, who could not repress sedition when he commanded an army of more than three thousand men, would be able to maintain order and obedience when he had only twenty or thirty police at his command. He could not even prevent the nobility from being besieged by the populace, for three days and two nights, in the hall of the States. At length, quite exhausted with hunger and fatigue, they came out on the third day, with their swords drawn, to force their way through the mob. Upon this occasion, a gentleman was killed by the firing of a pistol, and another was dangerously wounded.

It was known, two days after, that four hundred young men had come armed, from Nantes, to the assistance of the citizens of Rennes. M. de Thiard sent the captain of his guard to meet them, in order to assure them that tranquillity was re-established; and as their presence could only breed tumult, he ordered them, in the King's name, to return to Nantes. But this did not prevent them from continuing their journey; and they arrived that very day at Rennes, where they were well received. In this state of affairs, it was impossible to continue the Assembly: almost all the nobility had left Rennes,



and M. de Thiard received orders to put an end to the meeting of the States.

I was then at Paris, far from these storms, which I had but too well foreseen; and I had many apprehensions, on account of the danger which threatened the kingdom at the approaching meeting of the States-General, especially as they were to be constituted according to the new form, which M. Necker had persuaded the King to adopt. I was so much convinced that nothing but evil could be the result, that, to avoid the odium of having had any share in it, I absented myself from the Electoral Assembly of my Section at Paris.

I had bestowed great pains in studying all that concerns the States-General, in the most authentic monuments of our history, and had made a collection of notes and remarks upon that important point of our constitution. I gave an extract of these to M. Necker; but as he did not find among them what he wanted, namely, some authority or precedent for doubling the number of the deputies of the Third Estate in the assembly of the States, he made no use of the materials with which I furnished him.

Some days after the opening of the States-General, the desire I had to know the particulars of what was passing carried me to Versailles. I was accosted, in the street, by three deputies of the Third Estate of Brittany. They expressed much regret that they had not been able to find me sooner, and requested a rendezvous, to confer with me upon very important matters. It was then about seven o'clock at night, and I proposed to accompany them to their lodgings. They agreed to this proposal so much the more willingly, as they expected, that evening, some of their colleagues, members of the Breton Club, from which was formed, in a short time, the celebrated Jacobin Club. I accordingly went with them to

their inn, where our company was soon increased by the addition of seven or eight persons, amongst whom were four deputies whom I had known in Brittany.

After I had been introduced to those who were strangers to me, Champeaux Paslane, deputy from St. Brieux, told me, that since their arrival, he and his colleagues had been extremely solicitous to see me, in order to take my opinion upon the conduct which they ought to maintain. "We are here," said he, "as if we had fallen from the clouds, in an unknown country, where an order of things exists, of which we had no idea. We are unacquainted with the Court and the Ministers, we know not what they desire of us, and we hope that you will direct us. You know our reliance upon you, and you may believe that we shall pay the same regard to your advice here that we had in Brittany." They all united in the same request, accompanied with the same assurances. I inquired what were their sentiments, and in what way they expected me to direct them. They assured me, that their intention was to do all in their power to establish the King's authority in such a manner, that the nobility and Parlement might never have the power of injuring it. I greatly approved of these sentiments; but I observed, that as I was not in the ministry, I could not take upon me to direct them; that it was M. Necker to whom they ought to address themselves; and that I would speak to him, if they authorized me. They answered, that they were not fond of going to M. Necker, because there was always a crowd at his house; and that if they were often seen with him, they would be suspected of being sold to the Court: but that if I would be their interpreter with M. Necker, and transmit them his instructions, they would always strictly conform to them. I promised to wait upon M. Necker next day, and to bring to them his answer. They then consulted me upon the choice of their

President; and they knew so little of the Court, that they had determined to choose the Duke of Orleans, from the idea that they could not make a choice more agreeable to the King. I convinced them of their error; and M. Bailly was named President.

I went next day to inform M. Necker of the disposition of these deputies; but not being able to see him, I desired M. Coster, his first secretary, to acquaint him with my business. When I went, next day, to receive M. Necker's answer, M. Coster told me that the Minister declined all private communication with those deputies, as repugnant to the purity of his principles, since it might be considered as tampering with them, or a species of corruption. Some days after, M. Necker renewed an offer, which had been formerly made to me by Messrs. Barentin and de Montmorin, and which I had refused, of the place of first President of the *Grand Conseil* at Paris, as an indemnification for the loss of the intendance of Brittany. He added, that the King had commissioned him to renew this proposal, and was so desirous that I should accept of it, that he left it in my power to propose my own conditions with regard to the appointment. I persisted in my refusal, upon account of the uncertainty of every place annexed to administration, till after the close of the States-General. Irritated by this answer, M. Necker said to me, with great haughtiness and severity of manner, "You seem, sir, not to be very desirous to please the King, or to serve him."

"The King, sir," answered I, smiling, "does not think of me, and does not know in what I can be most useful to him."

"I have delivered to you, sir," rejoined M. Necker, with an air of authority, "what his Majesty gave me in charge; you may perhaps receive, hereafter, his express orders to the same purpose."

“How, sir? Express orders to accept the place of first president of the ‘*grand conseil*’?”

“Why not?”

“Because I never heard before of a man’s being commanded to accept a situation that he did not like as an indemnification or reward; and I am convinced that the King is the last person on earth to impose such a hardship. Nevertheless, if I should receive such an order, I will find means to transmit to his Majesty my motives for refusal.”

I now perceived that he was a good deal disturbed, therefore took my leave, and I never saw the great M. Necker again.

The manner in which the States-General were constituted, and the spirit of disorder which was manifest a few days after the opening, but too plainly showed what was to be expected from an Assembly, if it was not firmly maintained within proper limits; or rather, if advantage was not taken of the first favourable opportunity to dissolve it. This last measure was the surest, and also the easiest, as it only exacted a moment’s firmness. I proposed it, in a memorial which I transmitted to M. de Montmorin, at a time when it could have been executed, not only without exciting commotion, but to the great satisfaction of all the Kingdom; and this was at the time when there was a general outcry against the Assembly, upon account of the length and the indecency of the debates which had arisen, relative to the form of the verification of their election. This question had consumed the whole time of the sittings, for almost six weeks, and only served to irritate the *Tiers État* (third order) against the two other orders. These debates might have been prevented, had M. Necker better understood our constitutional laws, or had he been even directed by common sense. It certainly belonged to the King, who convened the Assembly of the nation, to

verify whether the letters of credit or mandates, of those who claimed the title of deputies, were or were not regular. But the measure of leaving this important point to the decision of the Assembly, having been already adopted, it would have been fortunate if the Ministry had known, or rather had they been willing to take advantage of the conduct of the Assembly, in consequence of its being left to themselves. The means of doing this I laid open, in the memorial which I gave to M. Montmorin, the substance of which follows:

“If it is wished to save the Monarchy, and to prevent the total destruction of the government, not a moment must be lost. It is not yet too late, and the means are in our Constitution; for it will be there found, first, that the business and powers of the States-General have always been limited to two points: the one, to unite all the instructions, demands, and grievances, of the particular constituencies, into one great address, and to present it to the King, who, with the assistance of his Council, decides upon it as he thinks proper; the other is by a general assembly of the whole, or by each order assembling separately, to vote or give their consent to such contributions as are necessary for the State.

“Secondly, The King retains the power of dissolving the States-General, whenever he thinks proper.

“The King and present Assembly find themselves in a position, for which there is no precedent in our history; for the instructions of all the constituencies are printed, so that the King may himself pick out the complaints and demands from the majority of the instructions, and, after mature examination in his Council, decide upon them, without waiting till the great address is presented by the States-General, who would have had full time to draw it up, if they had not employed themselves for a month in frivolous and obstinate de-

bates upon mere matters of form, of which no one can see the end, and which delay the advantages that the nation expects to reap from the assembling of the States-General.

“The eagerness for realizing these expected advantages is more than a sufficient motive to determine the King to carry to the Assembly, as soon as possible, first, An edict or declaration, by which his Majesty shall pronounce his opinion upon all the demands which are contained in the majority of the instructions, and grant such of them as are proper.

“Secondly, An exact statement of the national debt, with a detailed account of the usual expenses of the Government; not comprising the household of the King, Queen, and Princes, which his Majesty ought to announce he will provide for by the revenue of the domains of the Crown, in which are included the produce of the posts, which are farmed. This measure, which at any time would be useful, will be particularly so at the present moment, as it will withdraw the King’s expenses from the examination and censure of the States-General, and leave them no pretext for not voting, immediately, contributions proportionable to the exigencies of the State.

“Thirdly, A plan of finance, containing several modes of taxation, with an estimate of what each is likely to produce, to enable the Assembly to appreciate and adopt those which they imagine will be least burdensome.

“Fourthly, An account of the pensions, salaries, and perquisites, marking the reduction of which they are susceptible.

“After having read all these papers, the King may terminate the session by the following speech:

“‘That which I have now done for the relief of my people, and for the improvement of the government of my Kingdom, fulfils, as much as the circumstances will admit of, the wishes and demands which you are instructed to express to me.

There remains, then, nothing more for you to do than to accomplish the last part of your instructions, by voting the taxes; the necessity of which will be proved to you by the papers which have now been read.

“ ‘ This demand, which all your instructions authorize me to regard as already consented to by your constituents, ought to be the immediate and only object of your next meeting, which ought to be the last. I hope you will show yourselves worthy representatives of the French nation, by imitating, upon this occasion, the example of promptitude, which all the assemblies of the States-General, which have preceded you, have always shown. And I charge the presidents of the orders to announce to me, to-morrow, the result of the deliberation which you are to enter into; and I will inform you, the day after, of the definitive measures which the welfare of the State makes it my duty to adopt.’ ”

“ The King, upon the following day, may dissolve the States-General, whether they grant or refuse the taxes. In the first case, it is done of course. In the second case, the King must declare, that the fermentation and party spirit, which have never ceased to agitate the minds of the Assembly, from the moment of their meeting, had prevented those benefits being derived which he and the nation had a right to expect; and that his Majesty had resolved to dissolve this Assembly, and either to convoke another, or to consult the assemblies of the constituencies upon the mode of taxation; and that until their inclinations upon this important subject are known, the existing taxes shall continue.”

M. de Montmorin approved of this plan, and told me that he would speak of it to M. Necker, in the course of the day. To this I answered, that he might as well throw my memorial into the fire, as I was very certain that M. Necker would never adopt it. I expressed a desire, therefore, that he would



rather transmit it to the King, or cause it to be read in Council.

“This could answer no purpose,” said he; “for as soon as I should begin to read your memorial in the Council, M. Necker would stop me, and desire to have it communicated to himself before it was read, on which the King would order it to be delivered to him. But leave this to me, and I will speak to him in such a manner as will induce him to take your plan into consideration; and I shall take the same opportunity of prevailing upon him finally to fix your provisional appointments.”

I was convinced that he would neither succeed in the one nor the other, and I continued to urge him to transmit my memorial to the King; but he persisted in asserting that this could have no effect, for the reasons he had already given.

I was surpris'd, on receiving a letter, next day, from M. Necker, informing me that the King had granted me a pension of 12,000 livres a year, to begin from the day I resigned, and to be continued until I was named to another situation. I at first imagined that this favour, so soon granted, and at the very moment in which my memorial was transmitted to M. Necker, was partly bestowed as a recompense; and I concluded that the plan I had proposed was adopted. I immediately went to M. de Montmorin, to know whether it was so. He told me that M. Necker had read my memorial with attention; that he was pleas'd with it, and approv'd of the principal ideas; but that he thought this was not the precise moment for putting it in execution.

Eight days elapsed, without the Court's having taken any decided part. It was at this time that the Third Order, having assembled in the tennis-court, declared themselves to be the *National Assembly*.

Upon this occasion, I wrote again to M. de Montmorin, showing of what importance it was to take advantage of this

new attempt against the Constitution, and to employ it as a motive for dissolving the States. "Make yourself easy," said M. de Montmorin to me; "M. Necker does not sleep, as you will be convinced; and in a few days you will be satisfied. I cannot tell you more."

This mystery referred to the famous "seance" of the 23d of June, which was more fatal than useful in its consequences, by the insolent and perfidious absence of M. Necker.

CHAPTER VII.

M. NECKER.

Agioteur adroit, ministre sans moyen  
De rien il fit de l'or, et d'un empire rien.

CT. DE V—.

IN order to give a just idea of this man, as famous for the evil he has done to France, as remarkable on account of the kind of idolatry of which he was the object, I have thought proper to bring together, in one chapter, the principal facts which relate to him, separated from the historical details in which he has no concern.

M. Necker, from a common clerk to a banker at Geneva, at a salary of 600 livres a-year, having become, in a short time, a man of large fortune, a man of letters, and Minister of Finance, is certainly no inconsiderable personage. Considered in the two first characters, he might only have interested bankers and literary men; but considered as a statesman, he is connected with events of too much importance for any of the particulars of his administration to be foreign to the history of our disasters.

M. Thelusson, a banker at Paris, having requested his correspondent at Geneva to find out for him an intelligent clerk, to keep his cash-books, that correspondent, who was the banker with whom young Necker was then serving his apprenticeship, sent him to Paris, where M. Thelusson appointed him his deputy cashier, with a salary of 1,200 livres a-year. He soon afterwards became principal cashier, and gained the entire confidence of M. Thelusson, who, in gratitude for

some advantageous operations in exchange, which he had suggested, consented to take him in as a partner in his house.

M. Necker, taking advantage of the embarrassment of the royal treasury, at the beginning of the Abbé Terray's administration, made such good use of the capital of his patron, and of the company, that his share of those profits, manifestly usurious, was immense.

Such was the origin of his fortune, which he augmented very much at the time of the meetings of those who had claims on the old East India Company, upon whom he had the address to impose by manœuvres more lucrative than honourable; for which he has been since bitterly reproached by M. Panchot, who was perfectly acquainted with that transaction, and who was one of the ablest calculators in France.

M. Necker's foolish and enthusiastic admirers have never ceased extolling his rare talent for finance; but how can we believe in them, when we consider the enormous blunders he committed in his loans, the exorbitant interest of annuities upon many lives, the excessive quantities of reimbursements at fixed periods and at too short intervals, and, above all, the false and absurd combination of the last loan of his first administration, two-thirds of which remained, without value, amongst the refuse of the royal treasury, till M. Calonne, more skilful in the management of public credit, revived, and made an advantageous use of it.

As for the pretended economy of M. Necker, M. Bourgade, in an excellent memorial sent to M. de Maurepas, has plainly demonstrated the illusion of it, and made it appear, that the retrenchments, ordered by M. Necker with that revolting harshness of which he made an ostentatious display, only produced inconsiderable savings; and, by destroying public confidence, had done more harm than good.

M. Necker owed his nomination to the place of director of

the royal treasury to an intrigue which he set on foot against M. de Clugny, at that time comptroller-general.

M. Necker had framed a memorial, to prove that the one presented to the King by that Minister, the import of which alarmed M. de Maurepas, was built on false foundations and incorrect calculations. He there affirmed, that with more ability it would be easy to remedy every thing, and to make up the acknowledged deficit; he pointed out the means, and reserved the development of them till he should be put into a situation to do it with effect. M. de Pezay, who enjoyed great credit with M. de Maurepas, and who (as it is said) sold the influence which he had with that Minister at a very high price to the persons who applied to him, undertook to present this memorial, and to support it with his whole credit.

M. de Maurepas, who studied nothing but his own tranquillity, readily gave faith to the delusive promises of a man, who assured him that affairs were in a very good condition. On the death of M. Clugny, therefore, M. de Maurepas did not hesitate to intrust to M. Necker the direction of the royal treasury, and to appoint M. Taboureaux comptroller-general.

M. Necker's vanity was soon afterwards wounded by the inferiority to which the place of Director of the Finance was reduced, by its being deprived of the honour of direct communication with the King. As soon as he thought that he had made sufficient progress in the confidence of M. de Maurepas, and flattered himself with the hopes of his support, he found the means of exciting a financial controversy betwixt M. Taboureaux and himself. The altercation became so violent, that a reconciliation betwixt them was no longer possible. and M. de Maurepas was very much embarrassed as to what conduct he should adopt; but on letting it appear that he was inclined in favour of M. Necker, M. Taboureaux, who had accepted his office with reluctance, did not hesitate to give in his

resignation. The first operation of M. Necker, on his becoming director-general of finance, by the resignation of M. Taboureau, was to suppress the places of Intendants of finance, filled by old and distinguished members of the King's council, who, under the direction of the Controller-General, superintended some of the most important parts of that department. The suppression of those places could not be attended with any saving, because the appointments of those who held them consisted almost entirely in the interest of the price which they had paid for their offices, and which it was necessary to reimburse on their dismissal. It was presumed, therefore, that M. Necker was not so much actuated, on this occasion, by the real interest of the State, as by his own vanity, which he felt wounded, not only by the superiority of those persons of rank, but also by the superior talents of some of them.

The chief direction of the finances did not long satisfy his ambition. It was not sufficient for him to be precisely what his predecessors had been; for whether it was from whim or from vanity, one of the most remarkable traits in his character was a continual affectation of being different, in the whole of his conduct and discourse, from the rest of mankind.

The admiration excited by his famous "*Compte Rendu*" (the first publication of the receipts and expenditures of France ever published), in spite of the errors and falsehoods it contained, had greatly increased his usual stock of vanity. His pretending to provide for the expenses of the war with England, in favour of the American war of Independence, without imposing new taxes, although the attempt proved as ruinous to the country as it was absurd in itself, swelled his presumption to such a degree, that he thought the place of Director-General of the Finances beneath him, unless he was also admitted into the Council of State. He thought his talents so indispensably necessary, and his credit so high, that

the King would deviate from the established rules so far as to dispense, in his particular case, with the oath which all other ministers were obliged to take, before they could be admitted into the cabinet, and which he, as a Protestant, could not take.

Having communicated these sentiments to M. de Maurepas, that minister told him that it would be better to make his application upon that subject to the King by a letter, which he would undertake to deliver to his Majesty. This he did, in the intention, as has been generally imagined, to influence the mind of the King against so very extraordinary a request.

M. Necker was the more ardent in carrying this point, because he thought it absolutely necessary to remove the prejudice and the ridicule which had been raised against him by a multitude of pamphlets, and principally, by the Letter addressed to d'Alembert,<sup>1</sup> in the name of Carraccioli, which was in everybody's hands.

No answer having been sent to M. Necker's letter for two days, he was so much irritated, that he carried his resignation to the Queen, informing her Majesty, that if a place in the cabinet was refused him, it was not in his power to do any further good. The Queen, to his great astonishment, received his resignation without any mark of concern, only assuring him that she would deliver it to the King. On the following day, a new Minister of Finance was appointed.

The pride, hypocrisy, and violence of M. Necker, and his ridiculous rage against all the pamphlets of which he was the

<sup>1</sup> The "Lettre à d'Alembert" ridiculing Necker's personality and financial proposals was written, not by the Marquis de Caraccioli, but by the Count de Grimour, author of a life of Frederick the Great and many other works. Necker's extreme sensitiveness to flattery or to ridicule has been noted by other authors, as well as by Bertrand de Moleville.



subject, were very plainly manifested, in a truly curious conversation which he had with the Comte de Vaudreuil, at the commencement of his first administration; of which conversation the following is the substance, as it was communicated to me by the Comte de Vaudreuil himself.

“Three months after the nomination of M. Necker to the place of Director-General of Finance, M. de Vaudreuil went to speak to him on an affair which regarded one of his relations. He was received with politeness, and even with kindness. After having finished his business, as he was about to retire, M. Necker expressed a desire to converse with him a few minutes. He began with an eulogium on the King’s virtues, and on his application to business. This was followed by another on the Queen. When those topics were exhausted, he began to speak of himself, of his labours, his vigilance, of the constant obstacles which he met with in the painful career of his administration. He complained, with bitterness, of the attacks of envy, and of the libels which were scattered abroad against him.

“The Count replied, ‘that all persons in eminent situations, and of great reputation, were exposed to that misfortune; but it was to be hoped that he would annihilate envy by the goodness of his measures.’

“‘I agree with you,’ said M. Necker; ‘but a mind of such sensibility as mine can with difficulty support so much injustice; for amongst many contemptible libels, there are some which inflict cruel wounds, and which make a great impression on the credulity of the public.’

“M. de Vaudreuil, imagining that he alluded to a pamphlet just published by the Count de Lauraguais, answered, with a careless air, ‘You have only to peruse the late publication of M. de Lauraguais,<sup>2</sup> and you will immediately be convinced

<sup>2</sup> Louis Léon Félicité, Count de Lauraguais, afterwards Duke de

that there is nothing in it that need give you uneasiness. It is much too weak to hurt you.'

"M. de Vaudreuil had no sooner made this observation, than he perceived anger and resentment flash from the eyes of the philosopher.

"'What!' cried he, 'has that villain written a pamphlet against me? How dreadful it is to be restrained by my ministerial character! What pleasure should I feel in plunging a poniard into his heart!'

"M. de Vaudreuil, surprised and shocked at such violence, immediately arose, saying, as he withdrew, 'Believe me, sir, I only mentioned to you the name of M. de Lauraguais, because I thought you were speaking to me of his work. Assuredly it was not my intention to act the part of an informer against him.'

"The next morning the Count d'Adhemar, one of M. de Vaudreuil's friends, called upon him, and read a letter which he had just received from Madame Necker. The letter was full of inflated panegyrics on M. de Vaudreuil, expressing how much pleased M. Necker had been with his conversation, and how greatly flattered by the honour of his acquaintance, &c. It concluded, by desiring M. d'Adhemar to procure from his friend a copy of the work of M. de Lauraguais. This the

Brancaas, was before the Revolution a patron of the Drama and author of several plays, the best known of which was the Tragedy of "Jocaste." The Revolution turned his pen towards political literature, and he wrote a number of pamphlets, more or less satirical and sometimes brilliant.

The pamphlet here alluded to is probably the "Letters on the States-General convoked by Louis XVI. and composed by M. Turgot." Lauraguais remained in Paris during the whole of the Revolution.

He was not without his misfortunes; his wife was guillotined, he was himself imprisoned for more than a year, and the whole of his large fortune was confiscated or melted away. He survived the Republic, the Empire and the reign of Louis XVIII., dying at the age of 91, in October 1824.

former peremptorily refused, declaring, at the same time, how much he had been shocked at the indecent violence of the man, and protesting that he would never again enter his house."

Notwithstanding the unexpected mortification which M. Necker sustained by his dismissal, he confronted himself in the firm persuasion that he should very soon be recalled. His friends and creatures, in the meanwhile, continued to assert everywhere that he was the only man who could re-establish the affairs of the nation. A work in four volumes, on the administration of the finance, was the fruit of his retirement, and what he conceived would be an infallible means of procuring his recall; which, however, did not take place till some years after; when being recalled to the administration, he was then placed in the cabinet with more influence than ever. The regulation of the form for convoking the States-General was then in agitation, and that operation could not but be very embarrassing to a minister, so superficially acquainted, as M. Necker was, with the history and the public law of France. He employed several persons to compile extracts from history, relative to that subject, and to consult those men who were thought the most enlightened in such matters. This research being completed, M. Necker, as is generally believed, was not a little disappointed by finding no precedent or authority for giving the Tiers a double representation in the approaching assembly of the States-General; for which reason he prevailed on the King to adopt the measure of convening the notables, to take their opinion.

Being too little acquainted with men or with things to foresee the risk of the smallest innovation on the ancient forms of the Government, at a time when men's minds were extremely agitated; or being too presumptuous to dread that risk, M. Necker had the imprudence to submit to the discussion of the notables the important question relative to the

double representation of the *Tiers État*, which had been agitated in some pamphlets; and he had afterwards the rash inconsistency to influence his Majesty to decide in favour of the double representation, in contradiction to the almost unanimous opinion of those very notables, who had been called for the express purpose of giving their advice on that important point.

Experience has but too much proved the pernicious effect of this measure. M. Necker certainly was not aware of this; but eagerly grasping at popularity, he avowed and boasted that he was the author of this innovation, resting entirely on the gratitude of the *Tiers État*, and the promises made him by some of their deputations, to employ all their power to re-establish the King's authority, and to put it equally out of the reach of the attacks of the parliaments and of the nobility.

From that moment M. Necker showed himself the zealous protector of the Commons and of their pretensions. He even pushed his infatuation so far, as to suspend, by order of council, the judicial proceedings commenced in Brittany, on account of popular insurrections which had taken place there.

The concurrence of so many titles seemed to give him the assurance of great credit in the assembly of the States-General, about to open at that time; and certainly, with a small share of address, and less presumption, he would have acquired it in a considerable degree. The deputies of the commons of Brittany, who had the greatest share of influence in their Order, were entirely disposed to be directed by him, and addressed themselves to me to make the proposal to him, a fortnight or three weeks after the opening of the Assembly; but he formally refused it, for fear of being accused of having procured a double representation of the *Tiers État*, from the sole view of insuring their submission to himself. Being convinced that the decisions of an assembly, where the commons had the ma-

jority, could not but be favourable to his ambition, he thought it would be useless and perhaps injurious to his popularity to be suspected of influencing the deliberations of that assembly. He often declared, that the duty of the King's Minister, with respect to the States-General, was confined to the assembling of them, and to the conducting them to the door of the hall in which they were to meet; but that when the Assembly was once opened, they ought no longer to be directed by any thing but the light of their own understandings, and their instructions.

At this period M. Necker seemed to hold the destiny of France in his own hands. Without having the title of prime minister, he enjoyed more influence and power than any prime minister had ever possessed. He alone dictated all the decisions of the Council. His opinion was always adopted by the King. His colleagues, who had rather the appearance of being his first clerks, were very assiduous in paying court to him, and from morning to night his house was full of deputies.

The debates which arose amongst the Tiers État, at the opening of the States-General, on account of the verification of their powers, and respecting their voting by orders, had engrossed, for two months, the labours of the Assembly; their whole business, during that time, being reduced to certain attacks on the royal authority, some of more, some of less importance, to put an end to which, M. Necker proposed the famous declaration of the 23d of June, by which the King granted the principal demands made by the instructions of the deputies, announced the most favourable dispositions with regard to those which required more ample consideration, established periodical assemblies of the States-General, provincial assemblies, etc.

The measure was of so much importance, that before the King adopted it, he thought it right to submit it to the dis-

cussion of an extraordinary Council, to which the princes his brothers, and the most enlightened counsellors of state, were summoned. The plan of the declaration, framed by M. Necker, was unanimously adopted, the following corrections excepted:

First, The deliberation of the 17th of June, in the tennis-court, by which the Tiers État had declared itself a national assembly, was not formally annulled in the plan formed by M. Necker.

The opinion which prevailed at the Council was formally to declare the nullity of that deliberation, and of all which followed it, and to re-establish the title of States-General.

Secondly, M. Necker, in his plan, had taken no notice of the distinction of the three classes of deputies, but had merely authorized the Assembly to vote individually for that time only; that is to say, during that session.

The opinion which prevailed in the Council was to keep up that distinction, and to authorize the Assembly to vote individually only in the case where the object of deliberation equally regarded the citizens of all classes.

Thirdly, The plan of M. Necker contained an article, which declared that citizens of every class should be admitted equally to all offices, without any other distinction than that of abilities and virtues.

The opinion which prevailed at the Council was to suppress that article, upon the ground, that before the ordinance, published in the administration of the Maréchal de Ségur, the citizens of all classes were admitted into military employments, as they have always been into the magistracy and ecclesiastical professions; that it was sufficient, therefore, to revoke that ordinance by a new one, proceeding from the King, which revocation would have the whole effect of the article proposed



J. Goussier

*Necker*





by M. Necker, and did not require the solemnity of a law published in the States-General.

Lastly, By an article of M. Necker's plan, the Assembly was empowered to regulate the organization of all future assemblies of the States-General.

The opinion which prevailed in council was to suppress that article, because the right of regulating the form and constitution of the States-General belongs essentially, and had always belonged, to the King alone. And if this article was agreed to, the Assembly would unquestionably decide, that all future Assemblies should be composed precisely like the present; namely, that two-thirds of the Assembly should be taken from the Order of the Tiers: for besides the six hundred deputies, there were, among the three hundred of which the clergy consisted, at least two hundred *curés*, who, by birth, belonged to the Tiers État: of course the King's ancient and unquestionable prerogatives, in this particular, would be entirely annihilated, and the whole power of the States-General would be transferred to the Tiers État.

The King approved of these corrections, and announced that he would go the next day, January 23d 1789, to the Assembly, with all his Ministers, to publish that declaration. The mortifications which M. Necker's vanity made him feel, because his opinion had not been entirely adopted by the Council, inspired him with the insolent and fatal resolution not to accompany the King to the Assembly, upon that occasion. This circumstance was soon spread abroad, and all the members of the Assembly, as well as the public, concluded that the projected measure was contrary to the opinion of M. Necker. That conjecture, at a moment when the public confidence, and the whole popularity of the administration, were solely centred in him, was sufficient to occasion the

rejection of the most advantageous proposals, without discussion. Such, in short, was the declaration of the 23d of June, which, two months before, would have been received with transport, as the most signal benefit that could be conferred by the King, and in perfect conformity with the wishes of the nation.

The arrogance which the Assembly displayed, in rejecting this declaration, but too clearly proved that the royal authority was nearly annihilated. It was far otherwise with respect to M. Necker's credit. It had never been so great. The Assembly and the people approved, in the highest degree, his having dared to give the first example of opposition to the royal will. On their return from that sitting, the deputies went in crowds to his hotel; but he affected a slight indisposition, as an excuse for not receiving the whole, and admitted only a very small number of them. It was feared that his dismissal would be the consequence of the pretended patriotism which he had the courage to display on this occasion. No more was wanting to spread the alarm in Versailles. In the evening he waited on the King. As soon as it was known, an immense mob rushed into the court of the palace, and soon after, nothing was heard but shouts of *Vive M. Necker!* No resignation! and not one *Vive le Roi!* No one doubted, that in coming from the King, M. Necker would have had the prudent modesty to withdraw himself from the unbridled transports of the populace, by returning by the inner passage which led from the palace to the comptroller-general's hotel. But he was much too fond of popular applause to wish to lose any of it, especially at a moment when he considered it as an infallible preservative against the effects of the royal displeasure. He therefore came out of the palace through the public court. Instantly the multitude rushed to the place where he was to pass, with redoubled shouts, and made him

promise not to give in his resignation; which having done, those who were nearest raised him in their arms to show him to the people, and in that manner he was carried in triumph to his house.

From that moment disturbances, and the spirit of insurrection, made a progress so rapid and so alarming, that the King resolved to dismiss a set of ministers, who had but too well proved their incapacity to prevent the impending evils, or to remedy them when they arrived. M. Necker was the first dismissed. He departed secretly, on the 11th of July, from Versailles, according to the King's orders, and set off for Switzerland. As soon as the news of his departure arrived at Paris, it excited the most violent commotions. His bust, and that of the Duke of Orleans, were paraded through the streets, in the midst of the most seditious clamours against the King, and against the new ministers. The Assembly, either from weakness, or from a desire to preserve, to the Revolution, such a minister as M. Necker, instead of supporting the Government with all its authority, to secure the re-establishment of order, meanly followed the impulse of the populace, and obliged the King to recall the disgraced ministers, or, to speak more correctly, to recall M. Necker; for according to the prevailing opinion, the only circumstance which created any degree of interest in the fate of the other ministers was their having the honour to share his disgrace.

If, at a time when the public opinion was so enthusiastically in his favour, M. Necker had refused to return, and had continued, for the rest of his life, at his retreat in Switzerland, he might perhaps have been considered, by posterity, among the greatest ministers that ever France produced. As for my own part, I should have been well pleased that mankind had continued in this mistake, because the circumstance which removed it has cost so very dear to my country; for, unhappily

for France and for the glory of M. Necker, he chose to return to the administration, and entirely removed the delusion under which the nation laboured respecting his abilities.

It is difficult to calculate what would have been the effects of so wise a determination. It is not impossible that there might have resulted from it very serious attempts even upon the person of the King; and if that consideration determined M. Necker to return into administration, it is certainly impossible not to give him credit for so generous a motive. But to have rendered his zeal useful to the King and to the State, at that period, he had but one line of conduct to adopt, which was, to have immediately presented himself to the Assembly, and after having thanked them for the concern with which they had honoured him, to have candidly announced to them that he was the author of the declaration of the 23d of June, as it had been read in the Assembly except some expressions which had been altered, which by no means altered the sense of it; that he solemnly persisted in the opinion, that the form of government established by that law, according to the wishes expressed in the majority of the instructions, was the only one proper for France; therefore his conscience, his honour, and his zeal made it his duty not to return into administration till the Assembly had declared their adherence to the declaration of the 23d of June. The general confidence and vast credit which M. Necker enjoyed at that moment enabled him to give the people whatever impression he pleased, and to have made it impossible for the Assembly to have rejected his propositions. It was in his power, at this period, to have had many abuses corrected, the Monarchy, wisely limited and preserved; and by so important a service, he would have secured to himself as long a ministerial career as his ambition could have desired. But the transports of joy which burst from the people, at his return,

made him entirely lose his senses. His speech, or rather the few words which he was able to articulate, though flat and insignificant, were very much applauded at the time. But not satisfied with the incense he had received at Versailles, he set out to enjoy it in greater abundance at Paris. His arrival was announced to the municipality, and all the people hastened thither, to enjoy the happiness of seeing him again. He first repaired to the council of the Municipality which was assembled in order to receive him, and there pronounced a pathetic speech, in which he requested, as the greatest proof which the citizens of Paris could give him of their attachment, that his return might be the epocha of the re-establishment of order and of peace, the forgetting of all resentments, of a general amnesty in favour of those who had been prosecuted or arrested on account of the late disturbances, and especially of M. de Besenval,<sup>3</sup> his countryman and friend. All these demands were voted, and agreed to unanimously by the Council, and by the immense crowd which filled the tribunes and the galleries. He could, without the smallest difficulty, have obtained anything he had thought proper to have asked. He afterwards went to one of the halls in the *Hotel de Ville*; and, for the purpose of showing himself to the people in the most interesting point of view, he appeared in one of the balconies which looked into the *Place de Grave*, between his wife and daughter, who, to render the exhibition quite sentimental and affecting, and also to draw part of the applause to themselves, kissed his hands, and embraced him repeatedly.

<sup>3</sup> Pierre Victor, Baron de Besenval, a Swiss General in the service of France, was in the command of the troops stationed around Paris in 1789. Finding the Army under his command mutinous and out of hand, he determined to leave France, and obtained a passport enabling him to do so. He was arrested and sent for trial for desertion before the Court of the Chatelet which acquitted him. He is best remembered by his Memoirs, first published in 4 volumes, Paris, 1805-06.

He returned to Versailles, charmed with success, and more than ever convinced of his own vast power and influence over the minds of the people. But that illusion did not long continue. Scarce had he arrived at the barrier of Paris, when the sections being assembled, and having heard what had passed at the *Hotel de Ville*, considered the declaration which had taken place, on the proposal of M. Necker, as a manifest attack on the rights of the King and of the National Assembly, who alone were competent to grant an amnesty; consequently the deliberation was declared null by the sections; and four hours after the departure of the courier dispatched to set M. de Besenval at liberty, other couriers were sent, to order him to be again arrested. This fatal reverse, which Mr. Necker could only impute to the absurdity of his own conduct, was like a clap of thunder to him. His haughtiness and his hopes abandoned him. His importance and his popularity declined daily with the greatest rapidity. Thus the day which he considered as the most glorious of his life, was, in fact, the last day of his glory. Far from preserving any credit with the Assembly, he saw it diminishing daily. Those who had before been his secret enemies, now declared themselves openly, attacking him with bitterness, and overwhelming him with odium. They at length reduced him to the humiliating necessity of escaping, in the night-time, from the danger of a popular insurrection, which they excited solely for the purpose of alarming and driving him out of France.

Thus miserably ended the ministerial career of that extraordinary man, whose faults have cost France so dear. I say his faults, and not his crimes; for though I cannot reproach myself with having felt, for a moment, the smallest prejudice in favour of M. Necker, I knew him well enough to be firmly persuaded that he never intended the ill he has done, or that he had the least notion that his measures would pro-



duce it. I only blame his vanity and his extravagant presumption. He so completely, in his conscience, believed himself to be the ablest minister that ever existed, that he would have been mortified to have only been compared with Sully and Colbert. He did not hesitate to believe, that he combined, in a superior degree, all the great qualities of the greatest ministers, without any of their faults. Independent of his superiority over them in what regarded his administration, he thought that the confidence which the public had in his virtues and talents would enable him to embark in greater undertakings than any of his predecessors.

When recalled to administration, that same presumption, that same confidence in his own superior genius, which had always distinguished him, made him believe that he alone was capable of effecting the restoration of France, by giving it a new constitution. He was thoroughly persuaded, that the best constitution for France would be that which should secure to a minister, like himself, the greatest share of influence in the Government, and the firmest stability in his situation. He thought that the surest means of attaining that end, was to conciliate the favour and attachment of the majority of the States-General. If they had been constituted according to the ancient forms, the majority would have rested in the united orders of the clergy and the nobility. M. Necker having no means of attaching to himself the members of these two orders, they, as they were not connected with him, and looked for no service at his hands, owed him no gratitude. The measure he chose to adopt, therefore, was, that of loudly proclaiming himself the protector of the Tiers État. He was resolved to risk every thing, in order to give them the preponderance, not doubting but that as that Order would owe to him all its power, it would use it in the manner most conformable to the views of so popular a minister.

Such seems to me the most rational judgment which those who knew M. Necker could form of his conduct. To him, certainly, the disasters of the Revolution are chiefly due; but they must be set down to the account of his vanity and want of ability, not to that of his wickedness. I am as far from believing, with the admirers of M. Necker, that he was the ablest of ministers and the most virtuous of men, as from admitting, with his detractors, that he wished to destroy the monarchy, the nobility, and the clergy, because he was himself a republican of low extraction, and a Protestant. Posterity, which will appreciate him without prejudice, will see in him a man, selfish, ambitious, and vain; foolishly intoxicated with the merit which he believed himself to possess, and jealous of that of others; desirous of excess of honour and of power; virtuous in words and through ostentation more than in reality. In a word, he was a presumptuous empiric in politics and morals; but he was conscientiously so, for he was always the first dupe of his own empiricism.

He was attached to France, if not by affection, at least from always having considered it as the theatre of glory to which he thought himself summoned.

Fifty years sooner, when France was in tranquillity, his administration would have proved no more hurtful to that nation, than the magnetism of Mesmer to men of firmness and sound understanding.

As a Minister, he had no other merit than that of having acquired a perfect knowledge of what is called the *mechanism* of finances; but he was perfectly ignorant of the laws of the Kingdom, and of the principles of administration. As a literary man, although his works are laboriously composed, and written with affected emphasis, yet the useful truths which some of them contain will secure him a place among the distinguished writers of the age.

## CHAPTER VIII.

The danger of permitting the National Assembly to issue decrees.— Motives and means of maintaining the practice of voting by Order.—The dismissal and recall of M. Necker.—Endeavours of the deputies from Brittany to get me appointed *Garde de Sceaux*.—Opposition on my part.—Memorial, on the reformation of which the magistracy was susceptible.—New organization of the administrative bodies.—Advantages which might have been drawn from it.—Character of M. de Montmorin.—Retreat of M. de Fleurieu, in consequence of the perfidious conduct of one of his clerks.—The King, through M. de Montmorin, offers me the place of Minister of the Marine.—Reasons of my refusing.—The appointment of M. Thevenard to that office.

THE first deliberation, which the Assembly thought proper to denominate Decree, was, by this title alone, not only a violation of the ancient constitution, which never, in any case, authorised the States-General to issue decrees, but it was also the most serious possible attempt against royal authority, which, from that moment, ceased to exist. This point was thoroughly canvassed in the memorial above-mentioned, which M. de Montmorin gave to M. Necker, in which I insisted, that there was no law of the kingdom, authorising the States-General to issue decrees; and that, in fact, no Assembly of the States had ever assumed that prerogative; that if this form should be introduced through a new Constitution, approved of by the King and the nation, good and well: but no such thing existed at present, and the conduct of the States-General should be regulated according to the existing laws; therefore all the acts hitherto made by the States, and entitled decrees, ought to be annulled. For if the Assembly could of themselves pronounce decrees, independent of any interposition of

the King, what security had the nation that they would not issue a decree for taking possession of the finances, in which case the King would become a mere cipher, and the monarchy would be annihilated? In fact, the National Assembly afterwards perceived the force of this; for by the Constitution which they established, no act of the Assembly could have the force of a law or decree, until it received the King's approbation.

The best method of avoiding this danger was to insist upon the States voting by their different Orders; and the present emergency presented the King with a just and indisputable motive of terminating the disputes which had arisen upon this occasion, and of deciding the question against individual votes.

The Nobility, and the higher order of the Clergy of Brittany, had refused to name their deputies to the States-General, upon the pretence that the form of their convocation was contrary to the customs and privileges of the province. The ten deputies that the higher clergy ought to have named, were replaced by ten curés who belonged to the Third Order, at least by birth; but the twenty-one deputies, which the Noblesse of Brittany ought to have sent, were not replaced by the gentlemen of the other provinces; therefore the Order of the nobility had, in the States-General, twenty-one members less, and the Order of the Tiers had about ten members more, than they ought. It necessarily resulted, that in every question decided by individual votes, the Order of the Clergy and the Nobility would constantly find themselves in a minority of twenty-one at least; and that consequently all the power of this Assembly, composed of three Orders, would reside in one exclusively. This simple calculation, inserted in the preamble of a law in which the King would have prescribed to the Assembly to vote by Orders, would have been

sufficient to have shown the wisdom and justice of the measure, and have gained the King all the suffrages. But M. Necker was not yet convinced, that voting individually was more dangerous than useful. And with regard to the title which the Assembly gave to its acts, he placed no importance upon it. "It is only," said he to M. de Montmorin, "a mere dispute upon words; and it is not with words that we must occupy ourselves. The parliaments give decisions (*arrets*), the Assembly issues decrees, but the King always preserves the right of annulling the decisions and decrees which are contrary to law."

All this fine reasoning was completely false, and only proved the want of foresight in the man; for it is but too certain, that words have been one great instrument of the Revolution. It was by words, which the people did not comprehend, that their character, morals, and customs, were changed, and that they were at length brought to consider the greatest crimes as acts of patriotism and virtue. On the other hand, could M. Necker, with sincerity, compare the decisions of courts of justice to the acts of sovereign legislation, proceeding from a National Assembly, whose ambitious presumption so evidently tended to deprive the King of all authority? The decision made in the tennis-court, by which the Third Order had constituted itself, by its own authority, "The National Assembly," was broken by an article in the King's declaration of the 23d of June. But this article had the fate of the whole declaration, which proved abortive, as the Assembly refused to obey it, the Ministry, under the influence of M. Necker, being afraid to enforce its execution. The King becoming, at length, sensible of this, came to the resolution of dismissing M. Necker, and also those Ministers who were either deceived or misled by him. But the insurrection at Paris, which happened three days after, obliged the new Ministers to

give in their resignation, and quit the Kingdom; the sole means of escaping the fury of the people, who demanded, with loud cries, the recall of M. Necker, and those of his colleagues who partook in his disgrace; to all which requisitions, it is universally known, the King was forced to consent.

As soon as the day of M. Necker's arrival at Versailles was known, the deputation from the commons of Brittany waited on him, and delivered him a memorial, the object of which was to demand the place of *Garde des Sceaux*<sup>1</sup> for me. I was no sooner informed of this step, than I wrote to M. Necker, to assure him I had no part in it, and requesting him not to think of me for any place whatever, because I knew of none in which I could be of any use in the present circumstances. He did not answer this letter; and the Archbishop of Bourdeaux (Champion de Cicé) was named *Garde des Sceaux*.

It was but too easy to foresee, that every place to which I might be supposed, from my former situations, to have pretensions, would soon become dangerous, and almost impossible for a man of honour and integrity to fulfil with utility. I therefore gave myself up entirely to the duties of my office of *maitre des requêtes*, to the Privy Council, &c.

At the period when the Assembly prepared to regulate the

<sup>1</sup> The Office of Chancellor of France, who was also "Garde des Sceaux" (Keeper of the Seals) was before the Revolution, the highest Office in the Kingdom. The Chancellor of France, like the Lord Chancellor of England, was the head of all the Law Courts and of the legal profession and enjoyed many high privileges and honours; he was immovable except by death or resignation.

The Last Chaneellers of France and Keepers of the Seals under Louis XVI. were C. F. de Lamoignon, 1787-1788; C. L. F. de Barentin, 1788-July 1789; Champion de Cicé, Archbishop of Bordeaux, August 1789, to November 1790, and Duport Dutertre, who succeeded to the title of "Garde des Seeaux and Minister of Justice," 21 November 1790, to 22 March 1792.

His successors during the Revolution were known only as "Ministers of Justice."



courts of justice, I published a memorial, indicating some reforms of which those courts were susceptible. The constant and laborious study which I had bestowed on this subject, enabled me to propose a plan, in which all that seemed good in the ancient institutions should be united with whatever was wise and useful in the various systems now proposed. Several members of the Council and the Parlement, and many of the deputies, greatly approved of my memorial; and I have reason to believe that it would have proved of some utility, if the party which governed the Assembly had not been itself governed by a rage as extravagant as it proved fatal. Thus the Parlements, betrayed or ill supported by some of their own members, who happened to be deputies to the States-General, and vilified by the numerous band of advocates and attorneys, who formed the majority of the Tiers, became among the first victims of the desolating genius of that Assembly, whose convocation they themselves had promoted.

The organization of the Department of the Municipalities, and particularly of the Districts<sup>2</sup> of Paris, introduced a new

<sup>2</sup> For the purpose of electing deputies to serve in the States-General of 1789, Paris was divided into sixty districts. Legally these districts should have ceased to exist as soon as the elections were completed, but in fact, the electors in each District continued to meet and after the capture of the Bastille, July 1789, the districts were used both for political purposes and as the Headquarters of the National Guard. In a short time each District had raised a military force consisting of a Battalion of the National Guard and a company of Artillery, and each possessed a flag of its own.

On the 21st May 1790, the Constituent Assembly passed a Deeree which substituted the forty-eight Sections of Paris for the existing Districts. This law was passed with the view of diminishing the power of the Districts, but, far from succeeding in this purpose, the Sections soon became much more dangerous and menaeing to the central Government than the Districts had been.

The famous insurrection of the 13th Vendemiaire, when Paris rose against the Convention, was due to the union of several of the Sections of Paris. The insurrection would probably have succeeded



power, upon the scene of the Revolution, which the factions took advantage of, to render its course more rapid; but which might have been made subservient to stop it entirely, or, at least, to direct it better. This might have been accomplished, if the Nobility, instead of rendering themselves of no consequence, by acting singly, and by manifesting the greatest, and, unfortunately, the most fruitless antipathy against the pretended constitutional decrees, had seemed to yield to circumstances, and had reserved their final opinion of the merit of the new laws to future experience. They would soon have had the majority in the Assemblies of the Districts, provided they had attended them assiduously, and shown this spirit of moderation and prudence. It would have been an easy matter for them to have taken a decisive lead in the deliberations at first, because, in the beginning, the citizens and the inferior class, furnished but very indifferent orators, and still fewer tolerable writers; and such a number of both would not have been formed among the Tiers, if those who were distinguished by the appellation of aristocrats had not abstained from attending the Assemblies.

I had an opportunity of convincing myself of this truth, in the Assemblies of the District "*des minimes*," where, however, I only went, for the first time, six months after its opening. M. de Corberon, counsellor of the parliament of Paris, that day filled the president's chair. He never opened his mouth without receiving applause; and every motion was passed or rejected, according as he thought proper to support or oppose it. The other orators most in credit, were coun-

but for the accident of General Bonaparte's having been called in at the last moment to command the forces of the Convention.

But the danger with which the Government was threatened was too obvious to be overlooked and the Convention took advantage of its victory to abolish the Sections altogether by a Decree of the 9th October 1795.

sellors belonging to the Chatelet,<sup>3</sup> advocates, attorneys, notaries, &c., all men tolerably well educated, and of good sense. The inferior and uneducated people, at this time, did not even presume to speak.

The day after I had been enrolled in the list of active citizens, I was voted, by an almost unanimous voice, Commissary of the District, although I was only known by an opinion I had pronounced in the Assembly of that District on the preceding day, and which had been adopted. I found the committee composed of the wisest persons of the Assembly. No aristocrats, indeed, but many as much royalists as myself; all, excepting one Dutrouillet, a mad republican, and since member of the convention. His extravagant declamations against the executive power were overlooked, on account of his ardent zeal for the poor, and for the general interest of the people, of whom he always spoke in that bombastic language which is so often mistaken, by the multitude, for eloquence. There were some other seditious spirits in the section, who, from time to time, attempted revolutionary motions, in the meetings of the district; but the least objection was sufficient for them to be rejected, and often turned into ridicule.

<sup>3</sup> The Chatelet was the Law Court of the "Bailliage" of Paris, answering in some degree to the Lord Mayor's Court of the City of London. By a Decree of the Constituent Assembly, 14 October 1789, the Court was charged with the trial of the new crime of "Leze-Nation" (High treason against the Nation).

The most famous trials of this description were those of the Marquis de Lambese, Baron Besenval and the author of the insurrection of the 6th October. The judgments of the Court were too much in accordance with legal justice and too little in accordance with revolutionary principles to commend themselves to the Assembly and to the People of Paris. The Court was therefore abolished on the 14th October 1790, and the duty of trying political offences was transferred to a "High National Court" to sit at Orleans. This Court, which never had any practical existence, was in its turn superseded by the Revolutionary Tribunal, the most amazing Court of Justice in the history of the world, ancient or modern.

The good disposition of our Assemblies was daily fortified and improved by advantageous acquisitions. The first president of "*la Cour des Aides*," and the president of "*la Cour de Monnoyes*," who came after me, attended with unremitting assiduity; and for some time the *Section des Minimes* was distinguished from all the others by the wisdom of its decisions, the energy of its petitions to the National Assembly, and by its prudent addresses to the other Sections.

All the new theories of administration were discussed, in these Assemblies, with as much force as clearness, though always in that patriotic style which it was then absolutely necessary to assume, in order to be listened to; and by repeating, as often as possible, the words "*liberty, equality, the rights of men*," &c.

If, in the other parts of the kingdom, or even in the other Sections of Paris, all reasonable people had followed our example, it is more than probable that they would, like us, have succeeded in preventing or unmasking the criminal manœuvres of the factions, and gradually acquired such a degree of credit, in the majority of the Districts, as would have influenced the National Assembly, and produced the happiest effects in the course of the Revolution.

As the District of the *Minimes* gave the greatest umbrage to the Jacobins, they determined to use every means to disturb its meetings, and to terrify respectable citizens from attending it; for which purpose numerous detachments of their boisterous adherents derided, insulted, and threatened all whose opinions were dictated by good sense and moderation. The District supported these insults for some time, but the most moderate withdrew themselves, when they found that their perseverance answered no end. This manœuvre of the Jacobins, which was irresistible against a single District, would not have succeeded, if they had been obliged to employ it against

all the Districts of Paris; as they would have reciprocally assisted each other, and baffled the designs of that faction.

It may not be improper here to relate an anecdote, which may serve to give an idea of the freedom of opinions in this District. When they proceeded to the election of the Mayor of Paris, M. de Corberon said, loud enough to be heard by about fifty people, who were on the same side of the hall, "As I firmly believe that the Mayor, whom we are going to choose, will be hanged at last, I shall give my vote for the man who I think best deserves a gibbet, and that is the Duke of Orleans." This speech, which soon spread over the Assembly, so far from exciting displeasure, was rather applauded than blamed.

I may mention, as another instance to the same purpose, that I had, for more than nine months, attended the Assemblies of the District, and the meetings of the committees, without a national cockade,<sup>4</sup> and no notice was taken of it but by my

<sup>4</sup>The idea of a "National Cockade" was originated by Camille Desmoulins, who while haranguing the people of Paris in the garden of the Palais Royal on the 11th July 1789, plucked a handful of green leaves from a tree and placed them as a cockade in his hat, saying "Green is the colour of Hope." His example was followed by the crowd, who soon stripped the leaves from half the trees in the garden.

On the morning of the 14th July, the Provost Flesselles, doomed to die a horrible death a few hours later, tried to delay the mob by distributing to them "to keep them amused," cockades of rose and blue, the colours of Paris. Finally La Fayette distributed to the National Guard, the tricolour cockade, composed of white, the Royal colour, and red and blue, the colours of Paris. The royalists tried to adopt the white cockade, but were soon beaten out of the field by the more vigorous patriots.

It will be remembered that the Paris mob was incited to march on Versailles by the summons, probably false, that during the dinner given by the "Garde du Corps" to the Flanders Regiment and the National Guard of Versailles, the National Cockade had been trampled under foot and the White Cockade substituted for it.

On the 31st May 1790, the King issued a Proclamation ordering that, for the sake of peace and order, the National Cockade was the only badge which was to be worn in future and forbidding the

friends, who were apprehensive that this imprudence would expose me to insults; but I had such a horror of that badge of crime and revolt, that to avoid wearing it, I had never, since the King's arrival, gone to the Tuileries, or to any public place, where I could not be admitted without a cockade. I wore it, for the first time, on the day in which the King sent for me, to propose to me the place of Minister of Marine.

My forced retreat from the District of the *Minimes* obliged me to turn back to that state of inactivity, to which my resignation of the Intendance of Brittany had reduced me, and I became one of that too numerous class which remained passive spectators of this Revolution, of which murder and pillage were at once the object and the means; a revolution, of which the whole Kingdom was to be the prey; that has neither spared its authors nor their accomplices; for already many of them have been sacrificed, and, being joined to more illustrious names, enlarge the immense list of its victims. From this time I confined myself to my own family, and to the society of a few friends, only occupying myself in arranging my moderate fortune in such a manner as would enable me to leave the Kingdom, when I could no longer remain in it with safety. I continued, however, to dine once a week with the Count of Montmorin,<sup>5</sup> with whom I had been inti-

use of any other. Even in 1790 and 1791 Bertrand was a bold man to venture in the streets without this patriotic emblem. Had he remained in France, and survived (an impossible supposition) for a year or two longer such hardihood would probably have cost him his head. Under the Convention several Deerees on the National Coekade were enacted. One of these ordered the arrest and prosecution of any person found in the streets walking Cockade-less; a second extended its compulsory use to women (regardless of their complexion or of the colour of their hair); while a third made it a capital offence to tear off, or in any way insult the Cockade.

<sup>5</sup> Armand Marc, Count de Montmorin Saint Herew, was a cadet of an old family of Auvergne. His earlier life was passed as one of the pages of the Dauphin (afterwards Louis XVI.) and later in

mately connected ever since our residence in Brittany, where he was commander in chief when I was named Intendant of the province. He had remained in Brittany till the death of M. de Vergennes, Minister of Foreign Affairs, whose department was given to him.

Of all the men who acted an important part in the Revolutionary diplomatic service, where he gained considerable experience of the Courts and politics of Europe. He was appointed Minister of Foreign Affairs in February 1787; he followed Necker's example in refusing to be present when the King read his declaration of the 23d June 1789, to the States-General. He was consequently dismissed with Necker on the 12th, and recalled with him on the 14th July.

In the winter of 1789-1790 he joined the Jacobin Club, being the first of the King's Ministers to take so radical a step, but in June 1791, he was expelled from the Club as a "Traitor who had sold himself to foreign powers." The position of a Minister of State, under the régime of the Legislative Assembly became too useless and degrading to be endured by one who had served in that high capacity before the Revolution, and Montmorin resigned on the 20th November 1791. He still remained in Paris in order to assist the King and formed one of that small body of Louis XVI.'s faithful subjects and friends, who were constantly calumniated as forming the "Austrian Committee." Montmorin endeavoured to prosecute one of the most virulent of these journalistic calumniators named Carra, but could find no Magistrate bold enough to commit a popular writer for trial.

On the 10th August 1792, he took refuge in the house of a washerwoman of the Faubourg Saint Antoine, where he was discovered on the 24th and after undergoing a prolonged examination was remanded to the Abbaye prison, where both he and his cousin, Count Louis Montmorin, were assassinated on the 2nd September. His widow and son, aged 22, were guillotined on the 10th May 1794. Madame de Montmorin was convicted of being the "widow of the villain who betrayed France and who had undergone the terrible vengeance of the people (the stock phrase for the September Massacres)." Her guilt is proved by her regular correspondence with her husband. This correspondence exists, but was not produced. As Croker justly remarks, "Thus a widow was executed because she had corresponded with a husband who was assassinated before the Republic was founded," while a son suffered for the crime of his relationship to his father.



tion, M. de Montmorin is perhaps the person who is least known, and who has been judged with the greatest severity. The general opinion, with respect to him, is such, that one cannot, without being suspected of democracy, or, at least, of being a constitutionalist, acknowledge having had any intimacy with him; and it requires some degree of boldness to defend his character. My connection with him has been often stated against me as a crime; and I should not be surprised if that opinion, equally unjust and absurd, was still adhered to by some of those first enthusiasts of emigration, who have the candour to imagine that there are no true royalists in France, excepting those who emigrated at the same period with themselves. For my own part, I thought then, and do still think, that it was my duty, as a lover of my King and country, not to abandon them at a period when both were in such imminent danger, and while there remained any hopes of my being of service to them. Yet I do not take upon me to blame those who have acted differently; I only assert, very firmly, that their attachment to the King was not purer than mine, notwithstanding my intimacy with M. de Montmorin, who was neither constitutionalist nor democrat, but a true royalist; and I may add, with truth, that I know no person who was a more faithful servant to the King. I must at the same time acknowledge, that the extreme weakness of his character prevented him from being useful to his Majesty, in circumstances that required much energy; and it is probable that his fears may often have suggested measures more calculated to increase than to remedy the evils with which the King was threatened. This moral weakness had its source in a sickly constitution, and can no more be imputed to him as a crime, than his being of a low stature and slender frame of body.

Among the number of faults of which M. de Montmorin



has been accused, it would be easy, if not entirely to justify, at least to palliate the greater part, by demonstrating that they never proceeded from perfidy or self-interest. I one day had a quarrel with him, at his own house, upon the subject of a report made by M. de Freteau in the first Assembly, in which he had asserted, that at the Diplomatic Committee, held the day before at M. de Montmorin's, that minister had said, "that the Prince de Condé and the Cardinal de Rohan, who were out of the Kingdom, were intriguing and manœuvring, in order to raise up foreign powers against France." M. de Montmorin, in answer to the bitter reproaches I made on the subject, said, with considerable heat, "How could you, who know me, believe, for a moment, that I was capable of expressing myself in those terms? What I said," continued M. de Montmorin, "was nearly the reverse; for in speaking of the necessity there was of repressing the various excesses which were committed, and which had forced the Prince of Condé to leave the Kingdom, I endeavoured to show, that it was of importance to employ every possible means of engaging that Prince to return, because he was so highly respected, that the idea of his being forced to emigrate must have a very bad effect on the minds of all the foreign powers, and would excite against France all those who were allied to the house of Bourbon. With regard to the Cardinal de Rohan," added he, "we should also endeavor to conciliate him, if we wish for a favourable issue to our negotiations with the prince of the empire, relative to their possessions in Alsace, because he might greatly influence their determinations."

To all this, I replied to M. de Montmorin, "That since such was the case, it was incumbent on him, without loss of time, to give a formal denial to what M. de Freteau had said in his report, and address it in a letter to the Assembly."

"I was thinking of that," answered M. de Montmorin.

“But in case M. de Freteau has concerted the report with the other members of the committee, they are very capable, in support of their manœuvre, to oppose their testimony to my assertion, which, though true, will be reputed false.”

“Write, at least,” said I, “to M. de Freteau, to make him retract, or rectify his report; and warn him, that if he does not, you will have your letter printed in all the journals.”

He approved of this plan, as the most moderate, and wrote, the same day, to M. de Freteau, who, in his answer, acknowledged that his report was erroneous; that it proceeded entirely from inattention; that instead of saying, “M. de Montmorin had asserted that the Prince de Condé and Cardinal de Rohan were manœuvring,” &c., he (M. de Freteau) ought and intended to have said, “that from M. de Montmorin’s discourse, he was led to the conjecture that the Prince of Condé,” &c.

He promised to have this error corrected upon the register, conformable to the opinion of the committee, and to inform his principal colleagues in the Assembly. M. de Montmorin had the condescension not to exact more. I in vain intreated that he would make this answer and his letter public. He thought it sufficient to keep them both in his possession, to be made use of only in case his conduct should afterwards be publicly censured, on account of M. Freteau’s report to the Assembly. What is perhaps the most remarkable circumstance in this affair is, that M. de Montmorin was quite astonished at the energy which he thought he had displayed on the occasion.

This trait is sufficient to show the timidity of this minister. I say timidity, not cowardice; he was by no means a coward. No man feared death less; and it will appear, in the course of these Memoirs, with what tranquillity he foresaw and met his fate. Nay, he even braved it, but in a manner agreeable to his character; namely, by continual correspondences, and other

concealed, though dangerous measures, for the King's service, which he directed and paid for out of the funds of his department. Among these expenses was the money he thought it necessary to advance to certain popular orators, to counterbalance, in some degree, the furious declamations which were daily made against the King in the Jacobin Club, and in various other clubs, assemblies, and groups.

When I represented to him the risk that he ran, by this conduct, and the great danger there was, that some of the numerous agents which he employed would betray him, and expose him to be insulted, or perhaps assassinated by the populace, he answered, with great coolness, "I am well aware of the truth of what you represent; but no personal danger shall ever prevent me, while I remain in the King's service, from doing every thing that I think may be of utility to his Majesty." This way of thinking was very generous, no doubt; but the means he used were in my opinion infinitely less useful for the attaining the object he had in view, than many vigorous measures which he might have suggested to his Majesty, if he had possessed more energy of character, and less of that passive courage, which can only do honour to the close of life, because it enables us to die with firmness.

M. de Montmorin has been blamed for living in a kind of intimacy with certain deputies of the left. This, however, I have always considered as one of the strongest and most painful marks of his attachment to his Majesty. I knew that he abhorred their opinions, and despised their characters, and that he lived in that manner with them, in the sole view of bringing them over to his way of thinking. These measures of weakness and duplicity were employed by the King's consent, who trusted too much to them. Perhaps they might retard some pernicious decrees, and occasion others to be rejected; but the most certain and apparent effect was to make

M. de Montmorin be looked upon as a zealous partisan of the Revolution, and of its guilty authors. And thus, at the expense of his character, he obtained uncertain advantages, by far too inconsiderable to be purchased at so dear a rate.

It is not then astonishing, that the conduct of this minister has appeared criminal, or at least suspicious, to every person who was ignorant to what degree he was devoted to the King, and that not being able to serve him by firmness, because he had none, he endeavoured to assist him by every method which his weakness permitted him to employ.

But had M. de Montmorin been called to the ministry in less turbulent times, or had he been associated with ministers of greater vigor and of more upright intentions, the inconveniences arising from his timidity would have been fully compensated, in council, by his acquired knowledge, his fidelity, and the precise justness of his understanding.

M. de Fleurieu,<sup>6</sup> who succeeded M. de la Luzerne in the

<sup>6</sup> Charles Pierre Claret de Fleurieu, a distinguished naval officer, author and cartographer, was appointed Minister of Marine on the 27th October 1790. He found the spirit of insubordination and of open mutiny raging in every branch of the Navy; the officers driven to emigration to save their lives, and the work of shipbuilding, and of fortifying the posts at a complete standstill. To make matters worse he was denounced by one after another of his subordinates, whose complaints met with boundless sympathy from the Naval Committee of the Constituent Assembly, while he himself was treated with contumely and insult. After several months of useless endeavour to stem the torrent of revolt, Fleurieu resigned his office on the 17th May 1791. In his letter to the King on this occasion he wrote: "If it were merely a question of sacrifice on my part, my devotion to your Majesty and my desire to promote the public welfare would make such sacrifices light and easy; but when, after every effort, I find the means at my disposal for restoring order, or carrying on the business of the Navy, absolutely inefficient, I have no option but to resign my post."

On the 18th April 1792, Louis XVI. announced to the Legislative Assembly that in accordance with the Constitution he had selected Fleurieu as the Tutor to his son "on account of his probity, intellectual attainments and devotion to the Constitution."

department of the marine, may also be quoted in the number of ministers who had the same kind of weakness; with this difference, however, that his was never prejudicial to anybody but to himself, because he had the prudence to confine himself entirely to the details of the Marine and the Colonies; and the King, who greatly esteemed his virtues, never employed him (as he did M. de Montmorin) in any affair foreign to his department. M. de Fleurieu, whom no one, certainly, respects more than I do, joined to that timid modesty, which often accompanies the greatest merit, the candour and confiding simplicity which often renders honest men the dupes of designing knaves; and this he experienced in a manner the most revolting. One of his clerks, called Bonjour, who was attached and sold to the Jacobin Club, being irritated because the ancient Intendants of the marine, who had been suppressed by a decree, still preserved the same authority in the office, and the same superiority over the clerks, by the direction of M. de Fleurieu, had the baseness to denounce that minister to the Assembly as an enemy to the Constitution who was acting in opposition to the decrees of the Assembly. As the foundation of this denunciation, he made use of an order for the payment of the salaries of the office, signed by M. de Fleurieu,

There is some reason to believe that Robespierre was also a candidate for the part of Tutor to the Dauphin; the idea seems too startling to be credible, but it must be remembered that Robespierre's reputation at this time was totally different from that which he acquired during the Terror. He was known as an advanced thinker, of high character and puritanic simplicity of life. In any case, the Legislative Assembly returned no answer to the King and Fleurieu had hardly time to enter upon his duties, before the Monarchy was swept away, on the 10th August. Though imprisoned for several months in 1793-94 Fleurieu survived the Terror. During the Consulate and Empire, he enjoyed the high esteem of Napoleon, who promoted him to one high post of honour after another, Councillor of State, Count, Senator and finally Governor of the Tuileries.

He died at the age of 72, in August 1810.

but written by himself for the purpose. In inserting the suppressed Intendants in this order, instead of distinguishing them simply by their names, he had the perfidy to add their ancient titles, which had been prohibited by a decree of the Assembly, although the minister was permitted to employ them as he pleased in his office. This order, thus arranged, being presented by Bonjour to be signed, with several others, M. de Fleurieu, according to custom, only looked at the title and the sum total, and signed it without taking time to read over the names. His conduct had nothing in it reprehensible; and the infamous denunciation of Bonjour must have recoiled upon himself, rendered him infamous, and he would have lost his place, as being guilty of an abuse of confidence, and of a voluntary and premeditated infringement of the decrees of the Assembly; but M. de Fleurieu, satisfied with having justified himself, and apprehensive of a quarrel with the Jacobins, if he turned off Bonjour, left him in the office, and gave in his own resignation, to avoid the disgust of doing business with such a wretch.

The deputies from Brittany had reiterated their endeavours for my being named *Garde des Sceaux*, upon the retreat of the Archbishop of Bordeaux; and they now made a new attempt to have me made Minister of Marine, in the place of M. de Fleurieu. This was proposed to me by the King, through M. de Montmorin; but I begged of him to intreat his Majesty to dispense with my accepting it. The motives which I urged for refusing were, not only my absolute ignorance of affairs relating to the Department of Marine, but also the manner in which the council was then composed, and the great difficulty which the King must have found to have composed it of unexceptionable members at a period when, even in the formation of his Cabinet Council, he was under a necessity to pay some regard to the sentiments of the *coté gauche* of the



Assembly and the Jacobins; for their opinion passed for the opinion of the nation. M. de Montmorin, after having in vain combated the motives of my refusal, asked me what I thought of M. Thevenard, commanding the naval fort of L'Orient, where I had frequently seen him during the month which I passed there in 1784. I said, that the place he occupied, and of which he did the business very well, was perhaps the only situation he was fit for; and that it would be doing him the worst service in the world, to take it from him, but above all, to call him to the Ministry, because I was convinced that he would only expose himself, and could not remain in place two months.

The great difficulty of finding a proper person, determined the King, at this particular time, to name M. Thevenard<sup>7</sup> Minister of the Marine.

How much reason had I to felicitate myself, six weeks after, for having avoided by my refusal, the critical and unforeseen situation into which the Ministers were thrown, by the King's departure for Varennes, 21-23 June, 1791! During the time of his absence, and even after his return, from the end of June till the middle of September, while he was confined to

<sup>7</sup> Antoine Jean Marie Thevenard, an officer in the French Navy and one of the few officers who accepted the new Constitution of the Navy, was nominated to the Ministry of the Marine on the 16th May 1791. He remained in office for a few months only, being succeeded by Bertrand de Moleville, in the following September. He was then appointed to the command of the post of Brest, and shortly afterwards of L'Orient with the rank of Vice-Admiral. From L'Orient he wrote to the Legislative Assembly announcing that the Decree suspending the King after the 10th August had been received with enthusiasm in the port which he commanded.

The next year he passed to the command of Rochefort, where he remained until 1801, when he was appointed by the First Consul Maritime Prefect of Toulon.

On the 9th January 1810, he was created a Count and shortly afterwards received a seat in the Senate. In 1814 Louis XVIII. made him a Peer. Thevenard died at the age of 81, in February, 1815.



the Tuileries like a prisoner, and deprived of all his regal functions, the Ministers continued in the exercise of their offices, as if his Majesty had been at liberty and in power. They no doubt imagined that they would be more useful to the King and Kingdom, by acting so, than by giving in their resignations; but assuredly their conduct, on this occasion, would not have been mine. No consideration would have induced me to consent to become one of the chief agents, one of the first accomplices of a monstrous government, in which the King, unworthily outraged, and imprisoned in his own palace, had not, nor could have, any part. The Ministers were perhaps too much terrified by the menaces which were made, in case of their refusal, of immediately establishing a republic, and were not aware of the more certain danger of preparing and familiarising the public mind with the possibility of such an event, by exhibiting to the people's view, during three months, the revolting and absurd spectacle of a monarchy without a King. It is very probable that this fatal example gave rise to the idea, which was four years afterwards adopted, of replacing the constitutional King of 1791, by a Directory of five persons.

## LOUIS THE SIXTEENTH.

### CHAPTER IX.

Retreat of M. Thevenard.—The King again proposes that I should enter into the administration.—I accept.—Sentiments of the King and Queen upon the Constitution.—A letter from me to the Assembly.—Conference with M. Thevenard.—Opinion of the different parties, with respect to my nomination.—Ill disposition of the Assembly manifested in the very first sitting.—Prudent conduct of the King.—The Ministers agree among themselves to have no communication with the committees, and always to correspond directly with the Assembly.—Proclamation addressed to the emigrant nobility.—Letters from the Ministers of War and Marine to the officers, to engage them to return to the Kingdom.

THE new Constitution was now agreed to. The King had no other alternative but to accept it as it was presented to him, without alteration or restriction, or to abdicate the Crown; by accepting, he regained not the essential prerogatives, but only the vain title of a King, deprived of power, but with the enjoyment of his civil list, and the cessation of the humiliating rigours and exterior signs of his captivity. The pretended Constitutional Assembly being near the period affixed by itself for its termination, was to be replaced by the pretended legislative body, invested with the powers which the constitutional act had appointed; but with so little precision, that its ill ascertained limits might be infringed without any obstacle, for there existed no means of resisting any attack upon it, except the vague obligation imposed upon the King, of employing all the power which was confided in him to maintain the Constitution. But to employ this power against the attacks of the legislative body would have required great energy in the King, and the support of a Council composed of Min-

isters who possessed sufficient diligence, fidelity, and intrepidity, to brave all dangers in order to preserve the Monarchy; but unfortunately there were few men, I will not say in the Council only, but in all France, who possessed those qualities, with which I still believe it would have been possible to restrain the violences of the Assembly, and the want of which brought all to ruin. It was in these critical circumstances that M. Thevenard, who had but too well justified my opinion of him, gave in his resignation.

On the 25th of September, the King again offered to me, through M. de Montmorin, the office of Minister of the Marine; and in terms so pressing, that I was at first as much surprised as embarrassed. However, as the events which followed my first refusal fortified the motives upon which it was founded, I persisted in intreating M. de Montmorin (as the greatest proof of friendship he could give me) that he would do every thing in his power to influence the King to cast his eyes on some other person. The King wrote to me two days after, and enforced what M. de Montmorin had said. His Majesty ended his letter with the following sentence: "In a word, I am confident that your services would be useful to me and to the State. I know your attachment to me, and expect, in the present emergency, that you will give me this proof of your zeal and obedience."

In my answer to this letter, I persevered in my former opinion, founding my repeated refusal on the unjust but very universal prejudice that existed against all the ancient Intendants of provinces, which would render me suspected of being an enemy to the new order of things, with whatever prudence and moderation I might act.

The King, after having read my letter, said to M. de Montmorin, who had delivered it: "But ask M. Bertrand how I am to find Ministers, and what is to become of me, if per-

sons such as he, who profess themselves attached to me, refuse their services, and abandon me?" I was greatly moved and overcome by words so touching; and after the assurances given me by M. de Montmorin, that great changes were going to take place in the Council, and that I should be satisfied with the new Ministers, I no longer hesitated to answer that I was at the King's command; but I requested that his Majesty would not make my nomination public, until he granted me an audience. The next day, which was the 1st of October, M. de Lessart came to me from the King, and conducted me into his apartment.

As it was the first time that I had ever had the honour of speaking to his Majesty, on finding myself *tête-à-tête* with him, I was so overwhelmed with timidity, that if it had been my part to speak first, I should not have been able to pronounce a sentence. But I acquired courage, on observing that the King was more embarrassed than myself. He stammered out a few words without connection, but at last recovered himself, on seeing me more at my ease, and our conversation soon became interesting.

After some general observations upon the present difficult and perplexed state of public affairs, the King said to me, "Well, have you any farther objections?"

"No, Sire," answered I. "The desire of obeying and pleasing your Majesty, is the only sentiment I feel. But that I may know whether it will be in my power to serve you with utility. I hope your Majesty will have the condescension to inform me of your sentiments respecting the new Constitution, and the conduct you expect from your Ministers regarding it."

"That is but just," said the King. "This, then, is what I think. I am far from regarding this Constitution as a *chef d'œuvre*. I believe there are great faults in it; and that if I had been allowed to state my observations upon it, some ad-

vantageous alterations might have been adopted. But of this there is no question at present; I have sworn to maintain it, such as it is, and I am determined, as I ought, to be strictly faithful to my oath; for it is my opinion, that an exact execution of the Constitution is the best means of making it thoroughly known to the nation, who will then perceive the changes proper to be made. I have not, and I cannot, have another plan than this. I certainly shall not recede from it; and I wish my Ministers to conform to the same."

To this I answered, "Your plan appears to me extremely wise, Sire. I feel myself capable of fulfilling it, and I take the engagement to do so. I have not so sufficiently examined the Constitution, either in general, or in its particular branches, to have a decided and fixed opinion respecting its practicability, nor shall I form one, until experience has more enlightened the nation and myself. My present resolution is, never to deviate from what it prescribes. But may I be permitted to ask, if the Queen's way of thinking on this subject is conformable to that of your Majesty?"

"Yes, perfectly. She will tell you so herself."

A moment after, I went to the Queen's apartment, who, after assuring me with great goodness, that she was as sensible as the King of the obligations I had laid them under by accepting a part in the administration in circumstances so difficult, she added these words: "The King has informed you of his intentions relative to the Constitution. Don't you think, that the only plan he has to follow, is to adhere to his oath?"

"Yes, certainly, Madame," answered I.

"Well, be assured," rejoined she, "that nothing shall make us alter our resolution. *Allons*; be of good courage, M. Bertrand. With a little patience, firmness, and consistency of conduct, I hope you will find that all is not yet lost."

I was named Minister the 1st of October, and next day took

my oath to the King. According to custom, I announced my nomination by a letter to the Assembly. Many remarks were made, but without any apparent displeasure, on my not having imitated my predecessors, by flattering the Assembly, and praising the Constitution. I simply expressed in my letter, "that having sworn to the King to be faithful to the Constitution, I engaged myself to the Assembly to adhere literally to my oath, and promote the execution of the Constitution by every means within my sphere."

M. Thevenard was much more impatient to be out of the Ministry than I was to enter it. When he heard of my first refusal to replace him, imagining that it proceeded from my inexperience in maritime affairs, he sent me word that he would give me every necessary instruction; and when he afterwards heard of my accepting, he was persuaded that it was his offer alone that had overcome all my objections and difficulties. Two days after my instalment, he demanded a rendezvous, that he might fulfil his promise. Although I did not expect any very useful information from him, yet out of regard to the integrity of the man, and goodness of his intentions, I appointed to meet him on that same day. He came loaded with a port-folio, which I supposed was to be given to me, as the quintessence of all that was necessary to be known respecting the administration of the Marine and the Colonies. However, he only took a small packet out of it, upon which there were five or six seals, and which, ever since the administration of the Maréchal de Castries, had been transmitted, in succession, to the Ministers of Marine. It was inscribed, "*to be opened only in time of war.*" M. Thevenard told me, when he put it into my hands, that he believed it contained the secret of a method contrived by M. de Bellegarde, for setting the enemy's ships on fire. He then seated himself at my bureau, and spoke to me as follows:

“Well, you have obtained a very advantageous, agreeable appointment, and I leave it to you in an excellent condition. You will find no great difficulty in the exercise of it; only the occasional annoyances of the Assembly; a war of pens. You will extricate yourself better than I could. I was in bad health. But at present the worst is over. This new Assembly<sup>1</sup> will be more tractable than the other. Your office is well composed. You have excellent first clerks, diligent, worthy men; very zealous, that is the main point. I must make you acquainted with them. You have, in the first place, M. de Malezieu, who has the department of officers, the nomination to employments, &c. But this must be written down, for it is of great importance.” Accordingly he gave himself the trouble of writing every minute article relative to M. de Malezieu’s department, exactly as it is printed in the Royal Almanack. With equal precision he wrote down all that belonged to the departments of the other first clerks, each of whom was successively called in as the article which concerned him was being written; and they were all presented to me with such exaggerated encomiums as greatly distressed their modesty. When he came to the article of the clerk Bonjour, I could not help expressing surprise, on hearing him praise that knave, after his infamous conduct to M. de Fleurieu, the late Minister of the Marine.

“I own,” answered he, “that I never would take part in any quarrel. I always avoided speaking of it. Bonjour is protected by the Jacobins — by the Assembly. What could I do? His dispute with Fleurieu was no concern of mine. The man

<sup>1</sup> “This new Assembly” was the Legislative Assembly which began its sessions on the 1st October 1789. Thevenard’s remark that this Assembly would prove more tractable than its predecessors, is a curious instance of the erroneous judgments formed by contemporaries.

It proved, of course, far more intractable in every respect than the Constituent Assembly.



is assiduous, very intelligent. He does his business, and that was all I wanted."

"But how," said I, "could you have the least confidence in a person who was first capable of drawing up a paper himself, and after he had got M. de Fleurieu to sign it, with a view to ruin him, lay the whole before the National Assembly?"

"I have already told you," answered he, "that I never investigated that affair."

"But were you not afraid," said I, "that he would play you a similar trick?"

"Oh, no," answered he; "I took care of that. Besides, I had a manner of living with my clerks, which attached them so much, that they never could think of injuring me. I always treated them like friends; and in the morning, when they came to do business with me, my method was to order a bottle of good wine; and so we began by taking a comfortable breakfast together. You cannot imagine what a good effect this had. I advise you to do the same."

"I believe it is a very good method," said I, "but it will not do for me, because I never breakfast. I must make up for this, by sometimes inviting them to dinner."

"You will do well to do so," answered he; "and I advise you to reflect seriously on the manner you are to behave to Bonjour. He is a dangerous man, be assured of that."

"We shall see," answered I.

"These, sir," resumed he, "are the hints which I thought it essential to give to you. With regard to less important circumstances respecting your department, your first clerks can inform you of these much better than I can; they are all very intelligent."

I expressed my gratitude for the service he had rendered me, and we terminated our conversation, which lasted two hours, including the introduction of the clerks.

The public was then very attentive to the choice of the Ministers, because, from their character, their known principles, and their former conduct, an idea, more or less just, might be formed of the King's sentiments and intentions. My nomination occasioned great speculation, as, since the opening of the first Assembly, I had acted no part, nor figured in any party. Those who knew my intimacy with M. de Montmorin, and who knew that I had regularly assisted at the assemblies of the section, believed that I was a Constitutionalist; and those who were informed of the zeal with which I had supported the interests of the people in Brittany, and the steps which the deputies of that province had taken to have me nominated to the Ministry, believed me to be a Jacobin. Others, from my birth, and the offices I had held, suspected me of aristocracy; while the most moderate aristocrats condemned me for taking any part in the administration, after a Constitution which they disapproved of was accepted. The principal journalists for some time contributed to keep up this diversity of opinion. The Gazette of Paris, which was written by Durofoi, and the paper entitled *l'Ami du Roi*, by the Abbé Royou, were full of sarcasms upon my nomination. Brissot published my eulogium in the *Patriote François*; but Condorcet, more circumspect, did not mention me in the *Chronique de Paris*.

The Legislative Assembly manifested, in the first sitting, the greatest desire to contest the honours and prerogatives which the Constitution and the preceding Assembly had left to the King. On the second day it was decreed, that when the King should come to the opening of the Assembly, the President should place himself on a level, and on an equal chair with his Majesty. This excited a general indignation against the Assembly; and although the Constitution had fixed nothing with respect to the King and the President's chairs, as

the former Assembly had never contested giving the King the most honourable place, this insolent pretension of the new deputies was highly disapproved of. It was still thought proper that the King should be honoured, and it was unanimously wished that he should, upon this occasion, firmly assert the dignity which belonged to him. The affair being discussed in Council, the King found a means, in the Constitution, of eluding the intended humiliation, by not going to the Assembly. In reality, the Constitution did not oblige him to open the session in person, or to go to the Assembly upon any occasion. The King preferred this to more vigorous measures, which were ever repugnant to his character.

The Assembly being informed of the King's determination, was now sensible, that in endeavouring to degrade him, it had injured itself in the public opinion. These considerations determined them to repeal the decree, and the King then consented to go in person to the opening of the Assembly.

By this decree of the 5th of October 1791, it was ordained, that as often as the King went to the Assembly, he should place himself in an arm-chair, upon the left hand of the President, exactly alike, and on the same level with that in which the President himself sat. By another article of the same decree, when the President or any other deputy addressed the King, it was to be done by the new appellation of *King of the French*. The same was to be used in all messages to his Majesty. This decree was repealed the very next day, after long and warm debates.

The unquiet and turbulent disposition which this Assembly displayed sufficiently warned the Ministers to keep themselves upon their guard, to study the Constitution, and to adhere to it strictly; that unfortunately being the only defense they had against the various attacks they were likely to meet with. Several of the Ministers having been injured by their corre-

spondence with and attendance upon the Committees of the first Assembly, came to a determination, and with the King's approbation, never to correspond with the committees, but always with the Assembly itself; which, indeed, was appointed by the Constitution, there being no mention made of committees.

The emigration being at this time considerable, and becoming every day more and more so, was one of the chief objects of the discontent and murmurs of the people. The King, who but too well foresaw the fatal consequences it would have, caused a proclamation to be published, recalling all gentlemen who had gone out of the Kingdom, and tending to retain those who were inclined to emigrate. He at the same time ordered the Ministers of War and the Marine, to write a circular letter to the same effect, to the officers of their department. This measure produced an impression in favour of the King upon the minds of the people; but it was attended with this inconvenience, that it suggested to the Assembly, who were then in discredit, the means of re-instating themselves in the public favour; and they succeeded, by a violent decree against emigration.

## LOUIS THE SIXTEENTH.

### CHAPTER X.

Promotions under the administration of M. Thevenard.—Duke of Orleans appointed admiral.—Motives of this appointment.—Projected changes in the ministry.—Resignation of M. de Montmorin.—Appointment of M. de Moustier to his place.—Afterwards retracted.—Motives.—Messrs. de Ségur and Barthelemi refuse the department of foreign affairs.—M. de Lessart appointed.—Retreat of M. Duportail, war minister.—Intrigues to procure the nomination of M. de Narbonne to that place.—The conduct of that minister.—Singular proposal he made to the Queen.—My first misunderstanding with the Assembly.—Result.—Decree against the emigrants.—The King refuses his sanction.—Message from the King, carried by all the ministers.

M. THEVENARD, about a fortnight before he resigned, made a general promotion in the marine, conformable to the new organization decreed by the Assembly; and although this promotion had not been officially declared, yet the most material articles, particularly the very remarkable promotion of the Duke of Orleans, was known to the public, therefore it was not in my power to make any alteration; and in spite of my extreme repugnance to many, I was under the necessity of signing all the letters addressed to the officers included in that promotion. All that I could do, was by an alteration in the expression of the letter, to evince that the promotion had been decided on before my appointment to the administration. M. Thevenard had hurried this affair, because he believed, as he said to me, that the nomination of the Duke of Orleans to the rank of Admiral would insure the King a sufficient degree of popularity to enable him to keep the new Assembly in proper bounds.

I was informed by M. de Montmorin, a few days after I entered into the Ministry, that the changes which the King intended in the Council consisted of, first, the nomination of M. de Moustier<sup>1</sup> to the department of Foreign Affairs; secondly, the dismissal of M. Duportail,<sup>2</sup> Minister of War; thirdly, the dismissal of the *Garde des Sceaux* (Duport Dutertre), to whom I was to succeed, as soon as the answers were received from some persons whom the King had in view for the Department of War and of the Marine. M. de Montmorin, in giving up the Department of Foreign Affairs, was to preserve his place in Council, in quality of ex-Minister, with a salary of 50,000 livres.

<sup>1</sup> Etienne Francois, Marquis de Moustier, was a military officer and diplomatist who had served as French Ambassador at London, Washington and Berlin. In September 1791, he was recalled from Berlin and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in an autograph letter by Louis XVI.

He declined office on the ground that his attachment to the King and his dislike of the Constitution would render his services more harmful than advantageous. After the death of Louis XVI. he acted as agent to the Count de Provence (Louis XVIII.) in London and Berlin. After the restoration he was promoted to the rank of Lieutenant-General. He died in January 1817, at Baille, near Versailles.

<sup>2</sup> Louis Lebegue Duportail, an officer in the Corps of Engineers, accompanied La Fayette to America and served with him during the War of Independence. On the 10th October 1790, he was appointed Minister of War but held office only until the 3rd December of the same year, when, after many denunciations by members of the Legislative Assembly and stirring scenes in the Chambers, he resigned and joined the Army in Lorraine. On the 15th August 1792, on the motion of the turbulent Bishop Fauchet, a Decree of Accusation was passed against him. He was fortunate enough to save his life by immediate flight to the United States.

In 1802 he was recalled by Napoleon, but died during the voyage to France. From the little that is known of him he appears to have been a man of ability and character. It may safely be assumed that the more able or honest was a Minister or Servant of the King, the more rabidly was he attacked by the united Girondists and Jacobins of the Legislative Assembly, October 1791–August 1792.

The only thing which displeased me in this arrangement, was the idea of being named *Garde des Sceaux*. I declared very plainly to M. de Montmorin, that I never would accept that place, because my being raised to it might be imputed to ambitious views; whereas I wished to have it in my power to show, what was really the case, that I had entered into the administration, in the present circumstances, for no other reason but in obedience to the King's repeated orders. And besides, as the new order of things had not taken place in the Marine Department, I wished to be appointed to it, because there it would be more in my power to reconcile my determined adherence to the letter of the Constitution with my obedience to the King; and I begged of M. de Montmorin to represent this to his Majesty, as I was not sufficiently at my ease with him, to venture speaking upon a point which might displease him.

M. de Moustier, Minister Plenipotentiary at Berlin, was recalled, in order to be appointed to the Department of Foreign Affairs, and came in great haste to Paris, according to his Majesty's orders. Scarcely was the motive for his return known, than intrigues were formed to prevent his nomination. His reputation for talents, and the energy of his character, made him be regarded as dangerous for the Revolution, and consequently animated against him all those who supported it. This cabal was reinforced by some intriguers, rash enough to desire places in the administration; and who, on purpose to succeed themselves, used every means to injure the character of every person who was called to it. M. de Moustier was declared to be a violent aristocrat. Some deputies were made to speak against his nomination. The King was told that it would have a bad effect in the Assembly, &c. On the other hand, the *Garde des Sceaux* (Duport Dutertre), jealous of M. de Montmorin's credit with the King, and



aspiring to obtain the chief influence in the choice of Ministers, had been sensibly piqued at not being consulted on my nomination, which, as he told me, he would have prevented. He was no less displeased upon the present occasion, because the King had never spoken to him of his intentions respecting M. de Moustier; and therefore he greatly increased the uneasiness which had been given to his Majesty on this subject. The result was, that M. de Moustier, instead of being Minister of Foreign Affairs, was appointed Ambassador to Constantinople, and the Count de Ségur to succeed M. de Montmorin, who, in spite of all my entreaties to engage him to remain in his place, never ceased his endeavours to obtain leave to resign, till at last his resignation was accepted. His retreat was, at that time, a misfortune to the King, because it was the moment in which his services might have been most useful, and in which there was the least inconvenience to have been apprehended from the weakness of his character. The King and Queen assured me that they had observed more firmness and decision in his conduct, since my admission into the Ministry, which was imputed to his confidence in me, and his reliance on my support. In fact, we acted together with unanimity on all occasions; and what we had agreed to in private was seldom opposed in the Council. It has been remarked, that the last months of the year 1791 formed the only period, perhaps, of the Revolution, in which the King and Council assumed the style which became them, with the Assembly.

The resignation of M. de Montmorin being accepted, the Count de Ségur,<sup>3</sup> who had already returned thanks to the

<sup>3</sup> Louis Philippe, Count de Ségur, was the eldest son of the Maréchal de Ségur. He began life as a Military Officer and served during the American War, after which he was promoted to the Colonelcy of the Regiment known as the "Ségur Dragoons." In 1774 he became French Ambassador to Russia, and accompanied the Empress Catherine on her famous voyage to the Crimea in 1787.

King for his appointment, was to be installed the Sunday following; but an unforeseen circumstance made him change his opinion, and threw the King into new difficulties. He happened to go on Saturday, to the National Assembly, where he found M. Duportail, who had come, accompanied by all the Ministers, to answer certain unfounded accusations which had been made against him. He forgot himself so far as to enter into an abusive wrangle with the firebrands of the Assembly, who, on finding that his impatience had carried him beyond all bounds, attacked him with the most gross abuse. This revolting scene, which M. Duportail entirely owed to his vivacity and want of address, disgusted M. de Ségur so much with the office of Minister, that he sent his resignation, or rather his refusal, to the King, the very next day; and the reason he gave was, that he was not endued with sufficient courage or moderation to bear such attacks as M. Duportail had been exposed to.

The bad success of these two nominations brought great discredit upon the Council, and augmented the King's embarrassment. I again expostulated with M. de Montmorin to prevail with him to withdraw his resignation, which, I gave him to understand, was what the King greatly desired; but I did not succeed; and he himself proposed that the King

Ségur returned to France in 1789 and embraced the Constitutional Cause. In 1791 he was despatched to Rome to endeavour to persuade the Pope to take a lenient view of the Civil Constitution of the Clergy, but was unsuccessful. He then went as Ambassador to Prussia, charged with the task of detaching the King from the league of Pilnitz, an important task at the moment. He remained abroad during the Terror, returned to France during the Directory and took service under Napoleon in 1800. The First Consul received him with open arms as one of the first of the old Noblesse who had joined him.

He held many high offices during the Consulate and Empire, and after the restoration was created a Peer of France. De Ségur died in August 1815, at the age of 71.

should appoint, in his place, M. Barthelemi, who was then Minister Plenipotentiary in England, and a courier extraordinary was immediately sent to inform him of his nomination. The papers relating to Foreign Affairs were, in the interim, placed in the hands of M. de Lessart,<sup>4</sup> but as M. Barthelemi refused the situation, M. de Lessart was definitely appointed to it, leaving the Ministry of the Interior vacant. M. de Montmorin would have remained in administration, if the King would have explicitly, and in direct terms, desired it; but his Majesty was greatly hurt, that a man, with whom he had been bred from his childhood, and whose resignation he had so long refused to accept, should persist in it; and therefore the King would never condescend to speak to him on the subject.

The brutality with which the Assembly received the justifications of M. Duportail having determined him to retire from administration, the friends of Count Louis de Narbonne were extremely active to get him appointed Minister of War. M. Duport Dutertre and M. de Lessart took upon themselves to speak of it to the King, who at first rejected the proposal.

<sup>4</sup> Claude Antoine Valder de Lessart was a protégé of Neeker. His first public office was that of Controller of the Finances, to which he was appointed 4th December 1790; a month later, 6th January 1791, he was appointed Minister of the Interior and later Minister of War and of Foreign Affairs.

On the 10th March 1792, after a report to the Legislative Assembly by Brissot, he was impeached for High Treason, and sent for trial by the High Court at Orleans. In the Introduction to these Memoirs, I have quoted a conversation between Brissot and Étienne Dumont, the Genevese, on the means employed in obtaining this Decree and on the methods used by the majority of the Legislative Assembly to destroy the remnants of authority left by the Constitution to the King. Brissot was not aware of the depth of the abyss on the edge of which he was exploding his fireworks. De Lessart's house was gutted by the Paris mob, and he himself was brutally murdered with the other Orleans prisoners at Versailles on the 9th September.

“I know M. de Narbonne better than you do,” said he to them, “and I know that he is unfit for the Ministry.” The bad success of this attempt did not rebuff them. They pressed me to join them, and to speak to the King in favour of M. de Narbonne. They solicited me through M. de Montmorin, who promised marvellous great things on the part of M. de Narbonne, whose greatest desire, as he told me, was to attach himself to me, to take my conduct for his model, and to pursue the same plans with me, &c. In answer to these fair speeches, I merely said, that not being acquainted with M. de Narbonne, I could not possibly say either good or bad of him, and that consequently all that I could do, was to be silent upon the subject.

M. de Montmorin, who had flattered himself, that in withdrawing from administration, he still should retain his place in Council, saw this hope vanish. The King, who had the same idea, having spoken to M. Duport Dutertre and M. de Lessart upon that arrangement, they assured him that it was expressly contrary to the Constitution, and that the Assembly would not fail to object to it; that besides, the Ministers of the Department being alone responsible, ought alone to be admitted to join in the deliberations of the Council; and that none of them would consent to remain and co-operate with one who was not responsible. The King, struck with the force of this objection, which had not occurred to him, renounced his plan with regard to M. de Montmorin, who, by this means, found himself deprived of his place and resources. His affairs being in such disorder, that his debts swallowed up his own revenue, I informed his Majesty of this, who granted him the sum of 50,000 livres a year from the fund of the secret expenses belonging to the Department of Foreign Affairs.

As the choice of a War Minister could no longer be deferred, and as M. de Narbonne was the only person proposed

to the King, his Majesty was forced to surmount the extreme repugnance he had against appointing him to that situation. On the 6th December, the day on which he was received into the Council, the Ministers informed him, in presence of the King, of a resolution they had taken against having any communication with the Committees, but of always corresponding directly with the Assembly, agreeably to the Constitution. The motives which were given for this resolution appeared to him very wise, and he promised to adhere to it. The very next day, however, he changed his mind, and went to the Committee of War, without mentioning his intentions to the King, or to the Ministers. He afterwards gave as a reason for his conduct, that a communication with the Committees appeared to him, on reflection, the surest means of making the Ministers popular, and consequently rendering them more powerful and useful to his Majesty. I contested this opinion, by insisting that a popularity acquired in this manner could only be of short duration; whereas a communication with the Committees would perpetually expose the Ministers to the greatest inconvenience, as nothing was so easy as to misinterpret their words, and give a false colouring to every thing they said; and that their denial could have no weight in the Assembly against the assertion of a Committee, or of many of its members. That besides, it was neither consistent with order nor propriety, that the Ministers should give the first example of deviating from the Constitution; and that it was evident deviation to act in a manner which it did not authorise.

M. de Narbonne was intoxicated with the reception which he had met with at the Committee, and with the alacrity with which all he proposed had been adopted, therefore he did not approve of my reasons. He went, every day, both to the Assembly and Committees, and obtained every decree he demanded. The patriot journalists proclaimed his popularity,

and he imagined it was so well established, that he might hope to extend its happy influence upon his colleagues.

In this state of affairs, and a very short time after his appointment as Minister, he set off to visit the frontiers and the armies.

The Ministers, dazzled, and perhaps jealous of his success, flattered themselves that they might obtain the same, by pursuing the same path; and from that time, without coming to any formal agreement upon the subject, or even consulting one another, each of them, individually, went occasionally to the Committees. I alone adhered to the agreements we had all made, by which conduct I offended many members of the Assembly, who construed it into contempt of the Committees; and I was not long without feeling the effects of their resentment.

The revolt of the negroes of St. Domingo made it necessary to send a speedy and considerable assistance. I demanded of the Assembly, in my own name, and under my own responsibility, the necessary sum for this expense. The Assembly rejected my demand, upon pretence that it was not presented in a Constitutional form; that it ought to have been made by the King himself. The pretensions of the Assembly, in this instance, being contrary to the Constitution, presented to me an opportunity of entering into a contest, in which I certainly should have had the advantage; but as this would have brought on long debates on some important articles of the Constitution, and as such a discussion must have considerably retarded the succours to St. Domingo, which were so immediately required, I thought proper to defer the contest, determining, in my own mind, to seize the first favourable opportunity of reviving it. In the meantime, I proposed to the King to represent to the Assembly, "that the form in which I had presented the demand of a necessary fund for sending



assistance to St. Domingo was not contrary to the Constitution, and desiring that they would take an affair of such importance into their immediate consideration."

The King consented to write a letter to that purport 14 November 1791 and the Assembly triumphed on the occasion, regarding it as a formal demand made by the King of the sum which had been irregularly demanded of me, and consequently an acquiescence in their censure of my demand.

This did not, however, prevent me from presenting, in the same form, a few days afterwards, a demand of the same nature, relative to an armament extraordinary at Toulon. The Assembly did not hesitate in rejecting this second demand as they had done the first, and even declaring it unconstitutional. Some deputies observed, with indignation, that it was astonishing, after the lesson I had received, that I so soon fell into the same error; on which account I was pretty generally censured. My colleagues reproached me for a conduct which threw discredit on the administration; and as the Constitution was not well understood by the public, few doubted but that the decree of the Assembly was conformable to it, and that my dismissal would be the inevitable consequence of my headstrong conduct; for in these terms they qualified the step I had taken.

A second letter, from the King to the Assembly, exposed the fallacy of all this reasoning, for it contained a full explanation of every article of the Constitution, applicable to this and every other case in which it was necessary for his Majesty to make application directly from himself to the Assembly; by which it appeared, that my addressing them as Minister, in this particular case, was according to the form prescribed by the Constitution, and that the decree of censure was the only irregularity in the whole transaction. The consequence evidently was, that unless the Assembly repealed their first





*The Comte d'Artois*



decree, I could not be considered as responsible for the mischief which might result from not sending succours to St. Domingo. This letter was expressed in a style which the Council had not, for above a year, ventured to make the King assume; and the Assembly were a good deal disconcerted. They got rid of this embarrassment, by sending the letter to be answered by the Constitutional Committee; which, however, never answered it. The Assembly at the same time declared that this letter must be considered as a direct demand made by his Majesty, and the sum which I required at first was accordingly granted.

All parties, except the Jacobins, applauded the energy displayed by the King on this occasion; and the obstinacy and ignorance of the Assembly was so apparent, that it fell as much, in the present instance, in the estimation of the public, as it had done, a month before, by its insolent attempt of seating the King on the same level with its President.

The public attention was soon after engrossed by a violent decree, to deprive the King's brothers (the Counts of Provence and Artois, afterwards Louis XVIII. and Charles X.) as emigrants, of their right of succeeding to the throne, or even of being appointed regents of the Kingdom, in case of a minority. The Abbé Fauchet,<sup>5</sup> about the same time, distin-

<sup>5</sup> Claude Fauchet shares with a much greater man, Bishop Gregoire of Blois, the reputation of being a sincere Christian and a fanatical Revolutionist. Before the Revolution, he enjoyed a considerable reputation as a Preacher. He was one of the few priests of any eminence, who took the civic oath of the Clergy. In 1791 he was elected Constitutional Bishop of Calvados and in the same year was also elected a Deputy for Calvados in the Legislative Assembly. There he distinguished himself even among the extreme members of the Left by the violence of his attacks upon the King and his Ministers. Re-elected to the Convention, he had the courage, while declaring that the "King had deserved a worse fate than death" to vote against his execution. To this offence against his Jacobin colleagues, he added the crime of speaking in favour of the Maintenance of Chris-

guished himself by an absurd denunciation against M. de Lessart, Minister of the Interior. The animosity of the Jacobin party was the greater against me, because of the King's letter, of which I was known to be the author, and also because I was the only Minister who refused to have any communication with the Committees. They thought proper, however, to let the advantage which I had gained over the Assembly be forgotten, and not to attack me till I had lost some of my popularity, which I very soon did, through the injudicious zeal of the aristocratic journalists, who greatly injured me by their exaggerated eulogiums.

At this time M. de Narbonne returned from his expedition to the frontiers. He had only been a fortnight absent. All the world was surprised at the rapidity with which he had accomplished so long a journey in so short a time; yet, he gave as circumstantial an account of the state of the places and armies, as an inspector could have given after a careful examination of six months; giving, at the same time, such a flattering representation of the state of the army and forts, that his brilliant report excited the most lively enthusiasm in the Assembly. At this period, when a war with the Emperor appeared almost inevitable, a Minister, who displayed so much activity, and seemed to possess so many resources, inspired the greatest security. This report being printed, and distributed

tianity and against the marriage of priests. In May 1793, he was expelled from the Jacobin Club, a sure presage of death. On the 18th July of the same year, he was accused by Chabot of complicity with Charlotte Corday in the assassination of Marat. The accusation was founded on the fact that Charlotte Corday, who, though not personally known to Fauchet, came from the Department of which he was Representative, and was brought by him on the day of her arrival in Paris, to witness the session of the Convention.

On the 13th October 1793, he was arrested and sent before the Revolutionary Tribunal, and on the 31st of the same month, he was guillotined with Vergniaud, Gensonné and seventeen other Girondist Deputies.

through the capital, raised the popularity of M. de Narbonne and his credit in the Assembly, to such a degree, that his friends began to think the War Department a field too narrow for his talents. Prompted by his natural vanity, and by the counsels of Madame de Staël, M. de Narbonne demanded an audience of the Queen, with whom he flattered himself he possessed more influence than he had with the King, who never appeared to have any confidence in him. His object in this audience was to read a memorial to her Majesty, upon the actual state of France, and the critical position in which the King stood. After expatiating on the difficulty of re-establishing the King's authority, and saving the State, he proposed, as the only remedy, to place at the head of government, in quality of first Minister, a man who, either by good fortune and address, or by real merit, had acquired a reputation for abilities, wisdom, activity, &c. and who possessed such a degree of popularity as to overawe and direct the Assembly; one who, in addition to these advantages, possessed an unshaken fidelity, an unbounded attachment to the King, and to all that concerned his Majesty's interest. Such a person being once found, the present emergency required that the King and Queen should place an entire and exclusive confidence in him, but without allowing it to appear; and that their Majesties should devolve on him the power of forming a new administration, and of naming to all the different employments the persons he judged most capable.

“All this is very fine,” said the Queen, after having heard the memorial, “but unfortunately impracticable; for where can we find such an unparalleled and admirable person for a Minister? And even if it were possible to find such a one, the King could not give him all the powers you mention, because, by the Constitution, his Majesty has not the right of appointing a *prime* Minister. He is obliged to name six, each of

whom must have the full direction in his own department."

This objection did not disconcert M. de Narbonne. He was very certain, he said, that the King might easily prevail on the Assembly to depart from the strict letter of the Constitution, for the sake of getting such a man at the head of affairs.

"Well," said her Majesty, "suppose the Assembly to have this complaisance, still I ask, where is the wonderful man to be found?"

To this M. de Narbonne, with apparent confusion, and with the voice of modesty, answered, "that many people supposed that he himself, whether from nature, or education, or good fortune, or all three, nearly united all the qualities he had enumerated."

The Queen, bursting into laughter, only said these words, *Are you mad, M. de Narbonne?* After this, he exhausted his eloquence to convince her Majesty, that what he proposed proceeded only from an excess of zeal for the King's service; and remarking that she still seemed to hold his proposal in contempt, he fell on his knees, and intreated her, with tears, to consider his conduct with indulgence.

The following day the Queen gave me an account of this extraordinary scene, in the very words I have related it, but in accordance with her wish I did not mention it to the other Ministry.

It will readily be imagined, that M. de Narbonne did not mention this step, nor its consequences, to any of his colleagues. He always preserved, with them, that style of pleasantry and easy gaiety which characterise him. He expressed a particular regard for me, and told me, that he greatly approved of the conduct I had adopted with regard to the Assembly, and that he would be guided by no other advice than mine. His intention might possibly be sincere, but he did not long persevere in it; for the very next day, having to demand an extraor-

dinary fund from the Assembly, for the expense of the troops to be sent to St. Domingo, he neither spoke of it in the Council nor to his colleagues; but he proposed to the King to sign a letter, in which his Majesty should demand the necessary fund *in his own name*. M. de Narbonne's reason for this was, that the Constitutional Committee not having decided upon the form in which the demand ought to be made, it was prudent not to renew the debate at present, as it would only retard the expedition. The King did not doubt but that the measure was concerted with the other Ministers, yet he hesitated before he signed this letter; and when he was prevailed upon, he added a postscript, in which he declared himself still of opinion, that the form adopted by the Minister of Marine was constitutional.

It would be difficult to calculate the fatal effect which this letter produced. It was considered as a proof of weakness and inconsistency on the King's part, and of a want of unanimity among the Ministers. From that time we began to be attacked with greater insolence.

The decrees pronounced against the King's brothers had not entirely satisfied the Jacobins, who governed the majority of the Assembly by their influence or threats; their rancour required another violent decree against the emigrants, and the Assembly satisfied them in this point, by issuing one, which not only exceeded its powers, but was even contrary to the spirit of the Constitution. This was so evident, that after a minute discussion, the King's Ministers unanimously advised him to refuse his sanction. But as the King had never yet employed this prerogative, the Ministers were of opinion, that to prevent its having a bad effect upon the public, and likewise that it might strike the Assembly with some degree of awe, it would be prudent to give to this measure an unusual degree of solemnity, by ordering the refusal of the sanction to be



carried to the Assembly in the form of a royal message, by all the Ministers, whose presence would mark their unanimous agreement; and the *Garde des Sceaux*<sup>6</sup> (Duport Dutertre), who should deliver the message, might insert in his speech some sentences, enforcing the wisdom and justice of his Majesty's motives for refusing his sanction to the decree.

The 12th of November being the day fixed for the message of the King, all the Ministers met at the house of the *Garde des Sceaux*, that they might go together to the Assembly; before we set out, he called for and drank two large glasses of water. I was afraid he was ill; but on mentioning my apprehensions, he answered, "No, it is only a precaution I take, every time I go to the Assembly. The blood boils in my veins when I hear these fellows speak; and if I did not take something to cool myself, I should get into a passion, and be apt to tell them very disagreeable truths."

"I hope," said I, "all this water will only moderate the passion, without weakening those truths you have to tell them, be they agreeable or not."

<sup>6</sup> Marguerite Louis Duport Dutertre succeeded the Archbishop of Bordeaux, as *Garde des Sceaux* and Minister of Justice, 21st November 1790. As a young and unknown man, he was recommended to the King by La Fayette, which sufficiently marks the general trend of his politics up to that date. When his appointment was announced in the Assembly it was received with vociferous cheering from the Left and the Spectators' Galleries, not so much for his own sake, for he was little known in Paris, but because, for the first time, a man of quite obscure birth and position had been appointed to the highest post of dignity in the Kingdom. Duport showed both ability and character in the discharge of his difficult post. He remained in office for sixteen months, during the last six of which he was constantly denounced by the Jacobins and Girondists of the Legislative Assembly. He resigned at last on the 22nd March 1792. Again denounced after the 10th August, he was arrested and tried before the Revolutionary Tribunal and guillotined with Barnave and others on the 28th November 1793, before attaining his thirty-ninth year. On hearing his sentence he exclaimed, "The Revolution puts men to death, it remains for posterity to put them on their trial."

“Fear not,” replied he.

The appearance of all the Ministers, and a message from the King (the first the Assembly had ever received, and of which the object was entirely unknown), excited a general and profound silence in the hall and in the tribunes. That of the tribunes could only be imputed to curiosity; but in the silence of the Assembly there was at least as much uneasiness as surprise. The *Garde des Sceaux* began by laying upon the table the different decrees which the King had sanctioned, among which were two or three which the Assembly had expected, for some time, with a good deal of impatience. He terminated this first part of his mission by informing the Assembly, that with respect to the decree against the emigrants, the *King would examine it*; which signified, in constitutional language, that the decree was refused. He then drew from his pocket the paper which contained his discourse. Unluckily the water operated, at that moment, with so much violence, that his colour forsook him, his hands trembled, and his voice failed him so much, that he could hardly read. And what was still more unlucky, the first phrase, instead of relating to the subject of the message, mentioned the refusal of the sanction. He was not permitted to proceed farther. A general murmur arose. All the deputies spoke at once. Every one insisted on being heard, but no silence was to be obtained. They all vociferously exclaimed, “M. Le President, we cannot listen to this message.” “This message is unconstitutional.” “It is the motives for refusing the sanction.” “Call the Minister of Justice to order.” “M. Le President, the Constitution—” “M. Le President, allow me to make a motion of order.” This tumult lasted seven or eight minutes. The Ministers waited the issue of it standing. At length the President put it to the vote, Whether they should hear the message, or pass to the order of the day. The *Garde*

*des Sceaux*, entirely disconcerted by this tumultuous scene, sat down with the other Ministers, giving up all hopes of being heard.

To prevent such an unexpected and unfortunate termination of the business, I asked leave to speak. They refused to hear me, and the motion for the order of the day was carried; after which the President told me that I was now allowed to speak. I rose and said, that I now had nothing to say; but had I been heard before the last motion was carried, I should have informed the Assembly, that the object of the King's message was to acquaint them with the new measures adopted by his Majesty for stopping the emigration. This renewed the tumult: one party insisting on hearing the message, and recalling the decree just pronounced; the other exclaiming for its execution. But the Ministers remaining passive, and the *Garde des Sceaux*, who ought to have represented to the Assembly, that they had no right, by the Constitution, to refuse to hear any message from the King, being silent, the order of the day was adopted.

The single sentence which I had pronounced on this occasion was incorrectly given in the *Moniteur*, in which, after the words "*stopping the emigration*," which I had actually pronounced, the editor of the paper added what I had not pronounced, namely, the words "*of the Officers of Marine*." I expostulated against this false account, in a letter which I caused to be inserted in the same Journal, and in which I affirmed, that I had not mentioned the Officers of Marines; and that as none of them had deserted their posts since my entering the Ministry, there was no need of proposing to the King any new measure respecting them. It will appear in the sequel, what animosity this letter, innocent as it was, excited against me.

## LOUIS THE SIXTEENTH.

### CHAPTER XI.

Nomination of M. Cahier de Gerville.—The Ministers dine at his house, with Pétion, and some of the members of the municipality. — Decree against the priests.—The King refuses his sanction.— Denunciation against me.—The consequences of this affair.—Expulsion of Bonjour.

M. CAHIER DE GERVILLE,<sup>1</sup> who was appointed Minister of Home Affairs, in the place of M. de Lessart 30 November 1791, was formerly an advocate in the Parlement of Paris. Although his talents did not exceed mediocrity, he was esteemed for his probity and assiduity in business. He was then substitute of the chief law officer of the Municipality of Paris, and enjoyed great popularity. This consideration determined his friend, the *Garde des Sceaux*, to propose his appointment, as a means of rendering the King more popular.

<sup>1</sup> As stated here, Bon Claude Cahier de Gerville was appointed Minister in the vain hope of placating the enmity of the Legislative Assembly and the Municipality. His previous career has been that of a somewhat stormy patriot. By profession an advocate, he had distinguished himself by a pamphlet, published in 1786 against the civil disabilities of French Protestants, which was followed shortly afterwards (whether "post" or "*propter hoc*") by the edict granting them their full political and legal rights. He was elected in 1789 to a high legal office in the Municipality of Paris, which he held until his appointment to the Ministry, 27th November 1791. His nomination was at first welcomed by the Municipality, who passed a resolution to this effect: "Few ordinary men would have made such a sacrifice as M. Cahier. It can easily be imagined that a gentleman who possesses an income of fifteen or twenty thousand livres (francs), who is not of robust health and who enjoys so delightful a position in the society of his friends, cannot without some misgivings take up the burden imposed upon a Minister in

The effect of such temporizing measures, however agreeable for a short time, is seldom of durable utility. The present state of affairs required boldness and intrepidity. The people generally place their confidence, particularly in times of revolution, in persons who possess such qualities; for which reason, in popular assemblies, we constantly find that the majority declare in favour of the orator who has the best lungs, and is most violent in his opinions.

If the King had determined upon some vigorous measure, it would certainly have been wise to have preceded it by an act of popularity. But these multiplied concessions, without any act of vigour, were much more hurtful than useful, as the King acquired only a short-lived popularity, at the expense of dignity, and of the small remains of power he still possessed.

A few days after M. Cahier de Gerville's appointment, he invited the Ministers to dinner at his small lodgings in the *Rue Beaubourg*. Pétion,<sup>2</sup> who had just been elected Mayor these days of trouble and suspicion." He was not received by Louis XVI. with much sympathy.

The King is reported to have said to him when he first entered the Council Chamber, "You have charged yourself, Monsieur, with a very heavy task." To which Cahier replied "Nothing is impossible, Sire, to the deservedly popular Minister of a Patriot King."

Notwithstanding the demagogic nature of his addresses to the Assembly and the denunciations of priests and fanatics which savoured all his speech, official or otherwise, he was an honest man and consequently soon fell into the slough of difficulties and denunciations from which no Minister of the period escaped.

The tales of his quarrels with Bertrand de Moleville are fully narrated here. He retired on the 15th March 1792, and in October of the same year was an unsuccessful candidate for the Mayoralty of Paris. The remainder of his life was passed in privacy, in his native city of Bayeaux, where he died, at the early age of 45, in February 1796.

<sup>2</sup> Jerome Pétion de Villeneuve, while a Member of the Constituent Assembly, formed one of the small group of ultra-democrats who sat on the extreme left of the Assembly. At an early period he

of Paris, was also invited, with some members of the municipality. The intention of the new Minister was to associate us in his popularity, or at least to prove to us, that what the *Garde des Sceaux* had said was not exaggerated. The Mayor and members of the municipality seemed to examine us minutely, and had reason to be satisfied with our words and behaviour, for we showed them great politeness, and treated them as if they had been our companions. We played at billiards with them, and were always of their opinion. I particularly fixed my attention upon Pétion, for the King and Queen were prejudiced, at that time, in his favour, and had wished him to be elected in preference to M. de la Fayette, when they stood candidates for the mayoralty. As Pétion and I were the strongest at billiards, we played several parties together, and I was for some time left alone with him. His countenance, which at first sight appeared open and agreeable, upon a nearer examination, was insipid and devoid of ex-

and Robespierre, with whom he was closely allied in politics and social life, became the leading members of the Jacobin Club and showed the deification of the Paris Democracy. In June 1791, he was sent with Barnave and Latour-Manbourg to accompany the King and Royal Family on their return as prisoners from Varennes. Barnave on this occasion behaved admirably. Not so Pétion, who was so fatuous as to imagine that he made an impression on the King's sister, Madame Elizabeth. In his Memoirs he put on paper these words, "I think that had we been alone, she (Madame Elizabeth) would have abandoned herself to the promptings of nature in my arms." Neither this passage, nor the general incapacity and ill-condition of the writer were known to the King and Queen when they had the incredible folly to support Pétion's candidature for the Mayoralty against La Fayette, 14th November 1791. They paid dearly for their blunder. Whether Pétion played the part of a traitor or of an imbecile, or of a compound of both, before and during the invasion of the Tuileries by the mob on the 20th June 1792, is not quite certain. On the next day he was sent for by Louis XVI. and the following dialogue, in which for once the King showed some spirit, ensued:

*Louis.* Well, Monsieur le Maire, is peace re-established in Paris?



pression. His want of information and heavy elocution, meanly trivial or absurdly bombastic, made me consider him as a man by no means dangerous. I even imagined, that by flattering his vanity or ambition, he might be rendered useful to the King. His conduct has proved how much I was deceived; and I cannot, even at this distance of time, reflect without pain on my having been deceived by so silly a knave.

The Assembly, whose credit seemed ever supported by acts of violence, had passed a decree, enjoining the unconstitutional priests to take a new oath, or to quit the Kingdom. The bishops, then at Paris, were convinced that the King, who had already manifested the deepest regret for having sanc-

*Pétion.* Sire, the People having placed their representatives before you are now tranquil and satisfied.

*Louis.* You must admit, sir, that what took place yesterday was a disgrace and scandal, and that the Municipality failed in its duty by not preventing it.

*Pétion.* Sire, the Municipality did all that it ought and all that it could do. It desires nothing better than to make its own conduct as clear as daylight and leave it to public opinion to judge of it.

*Louis.* Say rather, that the entire Nation will judge it.

*Pétion.* The Municipality has no fear of the judgment of the Nation.

*Louis.* In what state is the Capital at this moment?

*Pétion.* Sire, all is calm and peaceful.

*Louis.* That is not true.

*Pétion.* Sire—

*Louis.* Hold your tongue.

*Pétion.* A Magistrate elected by the People has no need to hold his tongue when he has done his duty and is telling the truth.

*Louis.* I hold you responsible for the tranquillity of Paris.

*Pétion.* Sire, the Municipality—

*Louis.* You may go.

*Pétion.* The Municipality knows its duties and is ready to fulfil them without being reminded of what they are.

On the 9th July, the "Directors of the Department of the Seine," an authority nominally of higher rank than the Municipality, suspended Pétion, and the Recorder of Paris, Manuel. But Pétion was



tioned former decrees against the clergy, would be happy to have motives and means for refusing that one. They therefore determined to draw up a memorial against it, and applied to me to present it to his Majesty. I had a *private* correspondence with the Bishop of Uzes (Henri di Bethery) on this subject; for at that time a Minister could have no public communication with a bishop, without awakening suspicion against himself.

The King appeared much affected by this memorial, and said to me, with the energy which he ever showed in the cause of religion, "They may be assured I never will sanction it; still the idol of the Paris mob and the Girondist and Jacobin majority of the Legislative Assembly was thankful to take advantage of the tumults which arose throughout the city, and to be over-awed into re-instating Pétion and Manuel. On the 10th August, Pétion was imprisoned, or imprisoned himself in the Hotel de Ville, and during the September Massacres he pursued the same judicious course. At the first session of the Convention he was elected President. His friend and colleague Manuel, had the impudence to propose that the President of the Convention should enjoy the title of President of the French Republic, and be lodged in state, with a guard of honour, at the Tuileries.

Hence there immediately arose rumours that Pétion was meditating a Dictatorship and his popularity melted rapidly away.

During these first days of the Convention, the Republicans, united more or less closely in the Legislative Assembly, began to form themselves into two parties, the Girondists, forming the right of the new assembly, and the Jacobins, the left. Pétion joined the Girondists and Robespierre the Jacobins and their friendship and alliance came to an end. With the majority of his party, Pétion voted for the death of the King, and qualified his judgment by voting for the appeal to the People. He was included with all the principal Girondists, in the proscriptions of the 31st May, and 2nd June 1793.

Accompanied by Buzot and Barbaroux he escaped from Paris and found a temporary refuge at Saint Emilion, in the Department of the Gironde, but hearing of the discovery of two of their colleagues in the town, they quitted their hiding place and fled to the fields. Here Barbaroux tried to shoot himself, but failed and was arrested and guillotined shortly afterwards. Pétion and Buzot escaped for the moment, but their bodies were found some days later, 20th June 1794, half devoured by beasts, wolves, as it has always been believed.

but the difficulty is to know whether I ought simply to refuse my assent, and to assign the motives of my refusal, or to temporise, on account of the present circumstances. Endeavour," continued he, "to discover the opinion of your colleagues before the subject is mentioned in the Council." I remarked to the King, that he was not, by the Constitution, obliged to assign the motives of his refusal; and that although the Assembly ought to be pleased to see his Majesty give up that important prerogative, it was so ill disposed, that it might refuse to listen to his motives, and might even reproach him with this breach of the Constitution, as if it were a violation of his oath; that to temporise was only a display of weakness, and would encourage the Assembly to become still more enterprising; and besides that, a simple negative was at once more sure and more proper. The affair was discussed the day after, in a committee of the Ministers, and the indispensable necessity of a negative was acknowledged by all.

At the following Council, this measure was proposed to the King, who adopted it, with extreme satisfaction. But this interval of happiness was interrupted by the proposal which the Minister of the Interior made to him, of appointing constitutional priests to the Queen's chapel and his own, as the surest means of silencing the malcontents, and convincing the people of his sincere attachment to the Constitution. "No, sir, no," said the King, in a firm voice; "let no one speak to me upon this subject; since liberty of worship is made general, certainly I ought to enjoy it as well as others."

The warmth with which he pronounced these words astonished us, and silenced M. Cahier de Gerville.

The denunciation against M. de Lessart was rejected by the Assembly, after hearing his justification, in spite of the declamations of Brissot and Condorcet, the calumnies of the Abbé

Fauchet, and the wishes of Madame de Staël. That lady was desirous that M. de Narbonne should be appointed to the Department of Foreign Affairs. So far from attempting to conceal this, she had the sincerity to own it to M. de Lessart himself, in a letter of four pages, in which she endeavoured to prove, "that his honour, the welfare of the State, and the King's interest, required his resigning a place, which his bad health and his character rendered him unequal to, in circumstances so difficult." This letter was read in the ministerial committee by M. de Lessart himself.

The storm which had been so long preparing against me at length broke out, and Cavalier,<sup>3</sup> clerk of the office of marine at Brest, came forward as my accuser. This man, who was as great a knave as the Revolution has produced, had nothing more urgent, upon his first arrival in Paris, than to come and pay his respects to me, and to demand a more advantageous place than that which he was then in.

"Are not you a deputy?" said I.

"Yes," replied he; "but I do not regard that."

"But do you not regard the Constitution, either?" said I.

"How do you mean?" resumed he.

"I mean, that you ought to know," returned I, "that the Constitution does not admit of your filling a superior employment, until a certain time after the expiration of your depu-

<sup>3</sup> Blaise Cavalier, whom Bertrand describes as "as great a knave as the Revolution produced," a very large order, was chief clerk at Brest, when the Revolution began.

He was elected to the Legislative Assembly as Deputy for Finistere in September 1792.

According to Bertrand he came to London in 1794 and offered to deliver the port of Brest to the English Government, but was expelled from the country. However this may be, he continued to climb up the official ladder until he gained the appointment of Inspector General of the Navy, which he held until the year 1816, when he was either pensioned or dismissed. He died, at the age of 76, in 1831.

tation; consequently you can no longer insist upon your demand, as I cannot grant it without violating the Constitution."

"You are very rigid, sir," said he.

"Not at all; I am only faithful to my oath," said I, and left him.

Such was my accuser; and the pretence of his denunciation was the assertion which I had inserted in the *Moniteur*, concerning the officers of the Navy. But the real motive was to stop the reforms which I had announced or ordered in the principal departments of the administration of the seaports, where an immense system of pillaging, and all kinds of fraud existed. It was therefore easy for Cavalier to excite against me all who, like himself, profited by such abuses; and accordingly memorials, subscribed to by many names, supporting his accusation, were sent from Brest and Toulon. Those employed at the port of Rochefort, however, had the firmness and the integrity to resist all the manœuvres of Cavalier and the other Jacobins, for obtaining from them a memorial, in the same strain with those of Brest and Toulon. On the contrary, they transmitted to the King, to the Assembly, and to myself, addresses, in which they declared, "that having been strongly solicited to join my accuser, truth and justice obliged them to acknowledge, that they had only praises to bestow upon the wisdom and activity of my administration."

The memorials which came from the ports of Brest and Toulon were sent to the Committee of Marine, as was that of Cavalier, who was a member of that committee, and who caused himself to be appointed reporter of the whole affair. He was powerfully seconded by Malassis and Rouyer. The first was printer to the marine at Brest, and had accumulated above 600,000 livres, by the abuses which existed in that employment. The second was a deputy from Nîmes, as remark-

able, in the Assembly, for the strength of his voice, as for his audacity and stupidity. The chief confidant of this man was one Esmenard, a journalist, who was the framer of the motions which this noisy deputy vociferated from the tribunes.

This same journalist was also known to me. He had solicited the office of consul, and confessed to me, that Rouyer's violence arose from his hopes, that if I should be deprived of my office, it would be given to a certain friend of his own, from whose influence, as soon as he should be appointed Minister of the Marine, Rouyer expected to obtain the cross of St. Louis, of which he was very ambitious, although he had never served; and he also expected, by the same influence, to get a contract for furnishing provisions for the Navy for a particular company, who had promised him a reward of a hundred thousand crowns, in case he succeeded.

I was still so much affected by the rude and indecent conduct of the Assembly towards M. Duportail, of the insolent calumnies of the Abbé Fauchet, with respect to M. de Lessart, and with the weakness which those Ministers had shown in their defence, that I ardently wished for an opportunity of expressing my indignation against these contemptible denounciators; and I can say with truth, that the accusation of Cavalier gave me infinitely more pleasure than pain. My answer was soon ready. I went to the Assembly the 5th of December, and pronounced, with the utmost vehemence, a discourse, in which the following phrases (addressed, with a look of the most profound contempt, to the Abbé Fauchet) were generally applauded: "I have waited with impatience until a formal accusation against myself should furnish me with an opportunity of submitting to the wisdom and to the justice of the National Assembly some reflections, to induce them to receive with circumspection the perpetual accusations,

so often unfoundedly renewed, against the principal agents of the executive power. It belongs, gentlemen, to your dignity, to prove to all France, that this august temple of liberty is not a post from which the envenomed arrows of calumny can with impunity be darted against innocence, and the best friends of the country. A denunciation founded upon truth is a duty, when it can be useful to the public; but calumny is a crime which should ever be pursued by the vengeance of the laws, wherever it seeks refuge. The privilege of wounding the person, or attacking the life of a citizen, should belong to no one. But if this horrible privilege were allowed to exist, its most criminal abuse would be to direct it against those employed in the public service, because it would oblige them to consume, in their own defence, that time which they owe to their country. In short, gentlemen, it is the interest of the Constitution, and of its truest friends, that it should be executed. To the King is entrusted the important care of watching over it. The Ministers are his chief agents, and they ought ever to be treated with becoming respect. To connive at any attack against the dignity of their characters, is to weaken the springs of government, and tends to destroy the authority of the national representation itself. Nevertheless, if the numerous enemies, which the strict execution of our duty to the public may raise against us, expect to overcome our zeal by their calumnies, they will be disappointed; for I will take upon myself to declare, in the name of all my colleagues, that we consider such attacks, from such a quarter, as honourable for us, and of course such attacks will rather animate than depress our exertions."

This Marine Committee, puzzled to refute the proofs I had brought, and the facts I had established, in my defence, did not present their report of the accusation against me till the end of February, though the denunciation had been made



in the month of November. After the report was read in the Assembly, Cavelier, and five others of the committee, proposed a decree of accusation against me; but this was unanimously rejected. They then proposed, that I should be declared to have lost the confidence of the nation; but this also was rejected, by a majority of two-thirds of the members. They then demanded the *appel nominal*;<sup>4</sup> and as it was past twelve at night, many of the deputies, convinced I should still have a sufficient majority, retired. There was, in fact, a majority, but of fifteen only. On the following morning, at the opening of the Assembly, when there were only two hundred members present, a decree was proposed and passed, to present a memorial to the King, containing the causes of the Assembly's dissatisfaction with me; and M. Herault de Sechelles was mean enough to undertake to draw up this memorial. The success of this manœuvre was not yet sufficient for my enemies. There was hardly a day passed, in which complaint

<sup>4</sup> Speaking in general terms the "Appel Nominal" is somewhat similar to a Call of the House; an exact count and record of those present when a vote is taken. But under the Constituent and Legislative Assemblies, and still more under the Convention, the Appel Nominal was construed to involve also an open vote, instead of a vote by ballot.

It implied, therefore, a vote given by each member in the presence and knowledge of the crowded galleries of spectators, of whom we hear so much in these Memoirs, and was the most formidable means which could be employed to intimidate those who held the unpopular opinions. It seems to me incontestable that the sentence passed by the Convention on Louis XVI. was due absolutely to the Decree ordering that the voting should be by "Appel Nominal" on each question. Had the voting been by ballot, only a small minority would have voted for death, or against the appeal to the people. As it was, each Member had to run the gauntlet of an immense howling, bloodthirsty mob who packed the galleries and the halls, threatening with instant death every Representative whose vote was doubtful.

It is to terror, not to conviction, that we must attribute the regicide vote, counted by some as carried by a majority of five, by others by a majority of one vote.



of my administration did not arrive, through their means, from the different seaports; but these accusations were so absurd, and so easily refuted, that they did not give the smallest uneasiness, or cause me to deviate a hair's-breadth from the line of conduct I had traced for myself.

The following instance, among many, is a specimen of the means employed against me: An officer, named d'Estimauville, was recalled from India, upon account of a private quarrel. Being, soon after his arrival in Paris, destitute of money, he addressed a memorial to me, demanding to be comprehended in the distribution of a gratification granted by the Assembly to about twenty soldiers, who had been sent back to France from Pondicherry, by M. de Fresnes the governor, upon account of seditious practices. The decree, granting this shameful gratification, contained the names of those who were to share in it. I could not add the name of M. d'Estimauville to such a list, without dishonouring him and exposing myself. But his pressing necessity prevented him from weighing the motives of my refusal, and he complained loudly of it as an act of harshness and injustice. Some time after, he fell sick. The Jacobins being informed that there existed an individual who had a complaint against me, made him be sought after everywhere. One of their agents at last discovered his lodgings, in a miserable little chamber, to which he was confined by poverty as well as sickness. The agent introduced himself, and told him, that a committee being informed that he had cause of complaint against M. Bertrand, had deputed him to receive his deposition against that Minister, and, at the same time, to give him the assistance of which he stood so much in need. The agent accompanied these words with a purse of gold, which he laid upon the table. This proposal awakened in the mind of M. d'Estimauville the sentiments of honour natural to him. Indig-

nant at being thought capable of serving as an instrument of hatred to the Jacobins, he rejected their purse and turned their agent out of doors. He likewise gave a public account of the affair, in a letter to the President of the National Assembly, which was inserted in several journals in January and February, 1792.

This conduct, which was so much the more commendable, as it was really dangerous, interested all persons of honour in his favour, and procured him assistance which he might accept without blushing.

This increased the rage of the Jacobins against me; but the more pains they took to disturb my tranquillity, the more I affected to be at my ease. My house was open to the best company twice a week. I gave frequent dinners, and sometimes concerts, which began exactly at the hour of the evening sitting of the Assembly; so that my attention was engrossed by harmonious sounds, at the very time when the hall of the Assembly resounded with violent declamations against me. These declamations often originated in my own office, where I had, unluckily, more than one Jacobin; not to mention the clerk *Bonjour*, whose expulsion would have been one of the first acts of my administration, if the King had not feared the consequences of such a step. His Majesty insisted upon having it deferred, until I could find the means of dismissing him, without exposing myself to danger. With a view to this, I devised a new plan of arrangement in my office, more economical than the former, in which the department of the funds, of which *Bonjour* was first clerk, was entirely suppressed. At the same time, I discovered a piece of knavery committed by him, and of which I had sufficient proofs to have subjected him to shame and punishment.

My new plan of arrangement having been laid before the Council, and signed by the King, I delayed the execution un-

til Bonjour's accounts for December were examined. When I had finished that business, I informed him of that part of the new plan in which he was interested. The moment he understood that his department was suppressed, the most violent indications of rage appeared in his countenance. He was for some time unable to speak; but when he had regained the use of his tongue, he told me "that the King might, if he would, suppress his department, but that he could not deprive him of his situation of first clerk, because he was the oldest clerk in the marine office, and that he had decrees in his favour, which he knew how to make advantage of."

"I hope," answered I, calmly, "that I also know how to have the King's orders executed. I shall give you notice of them to-morrow morning, at nine o'clock. Don't fail to be at the office."

The next day I went there, accompanied by two clerks, whom I foresaw I should stand in need of. I ordered him, in the King's name, to give up the titles, papers, and documents of his department, and the keys of all the closets, presses, and other repositories of his papers. He answered, with more coolness than he had shown the preceding day, that he had consulted his friends, and lawyers very well informed upon the subject, who had all advised him not to obey this order, and that he would act accordingly. After having in vain endeavoured to make him hear reason, I drew up a formal account of his refusal, desiring him to dictate, and afterwards to sign his answers. This he did accordingly; after which, I ordered that a Justice of the Section should be brought directly, to take an inventory of all his papers, and seal up his repositories, according to the forms of law, and at the expense of Bonjour. This measure, which his friends, it is probable, had not foreseen, disconcerted him greatly.

“How, sir? at my expense?” cried he.

“Yes, undoubtedly, sir. Don’t imagine that the nation is to pay for your disobedience.”

“If that is the case, there are my papers and my keys. Take everything,” said he.

“No, sir,” answered I, “I will take nothing; but I will receive from you whatever the orders of your Sovereign shall oblige you to put into my hands”; and I received, accordingly, all that he had to give up; and a list was made, which he signed.

This business, which lasted two hours, being over, I produced my proofs against him, and made him acknowledge the writing before the two clerks, whom I had brought with me.

“You have made me,” said I, “lose a great deal of time; and were I to treat you as you deserve, it should cost you dear. The first of these papers is a memorial of yours to the Marshal de Castries, by which you persuaded him to grant to a contractor 300,000 livres, who asked 600,000, under the false pretence that he was 600,000 livres in advance to Government; whilst the second, written in your own hand, proves that you, at that time, knew the Government to be 500,000 livres in advance to him. He died, soon after, a bankrupt; and the Government lost 800,000 livres by your negligence or treachery. My memorial on the subject is ready, which I will address to the Assembly, if you make any complaint about your dismissal.”

This was enough for him; and far from murmuring, I heard that he everywhere applauded the new organization of the Marine Office; of which, the greatest advantage, in my eyes, was the removal of this worthless man. The same day an affair took place, which, although of less importance, produced a very good effect in my office, and re-established the subordination which the frenzy of the Revolution had considerably weakened.

A young clerk, who had obtained a place in the Marine Office, through the interest of one of the Queen's waiting-women, came and complained to me, in a very cavalier manner, for not having sufficiently augmented his salary, although I had, in reality, very nearly doubled it.

"If you are not satisfied with the augmentation," said I, without taking my eyes from the paper on which I was writing, "to oblige you, I shall restore you to your former salary."

"You seem to be in jest, but I am in earnest," said he, very impertinently.

"Very well, sir," added I, "then I must inform you that I am in earnest also; and I now tell you, very seriously, to make use of another style when you speak to me, for I will not permit you to continue that which you have used."

"In what style must I speak to you, sir? we are all *citizens*. I am a free man, I hope."

"Yes, sir, perfectly free; so entirely so, that I now inform you, that you belong no more to this office: so you are free to go where you please; for it is to be hoped that I may use the freedom of dismissing a clerk, with whom I am dissatisfied."

He went out threatening me that he would have the Queen informed. When I mentioned the affair to her Majesty, she declared that she did not so much as know him, having never before heard his name; and that I had done well in dismissing him.

It was to some fellows of this stamp, and several of them in similar situations, clerks and secretaries, that the greatest atrocities of the Revolution are to be attributed.

At the time that I turned off these two worthless fellows, I had the misfortune to lose the respectable M. Malezieu, whom I regretted the more, as his death was hastened by chagrin for the persecutions raised against me, which he

thought had been occasioned by the numbers of *congés* (leave of absence) he had persuaded me to grant. I in vain assured him that I had no cause to reproach him, for I was satisfied of the justice of every act he had ever proposed to me. But the mortal blow was already struck, and he fell a prey to the delicacy and sensibility of his mind.

## CHAPTER XII.

Constitutional Guard of the King.—Proposals to the King, respecting the formation of his household.—The Treasury inform the King that they could no longer pay any part of the civil list in specie.—My proposal to the King for procuring money.—Insubordination in the ports.—M. de Lajaille is assassinated at Brest.—My complaint to the Assembly, and to the *Garde des Sceaux*, on that subject.—A visit from the President of the Marine Committee.—The Committee determine upon a decree of accusation against me.—I am acquainted with this at midnight.—Shameful conduct of the Intendant of the Navy at Brest.

As Bonjour's treachery to M. de Fleurieu had not been punished, but, on the contrary, had obliged M. Thevenard to be more attentive to him than he would otherwise have been, the expulsion of that clerk was considered as an act of remarkable boldness. The King and Queen, however, expressed their satisfaction. I was congratulated upon it as a victory by many of my friends, and my other clerks thanked me for having freed them from the disgrace of having so worthless an associate. So much were all ideas of courage and energy lost, at this period, particularly in the minds of the Ministers, that the slight merit of not acting as a coward was admired as heroism.

A short time after the rising of the first Assembly, the King employed himself in forming a plan for raising the eighteen hundred men, decreed by the Constitution for his household troops. He deliberated long on the best method of executing this. The necessity of making great sacrifices to popularity induced him to compose this guard of officers and soldiers taken half from the national guards, and half from the line: but by a mistake, of which the consequences



have been very fatal, instead of choosing that half, which was to be taken from the national guards, out of the body of national guards of Paris, where it was of great importance that he should be popular, and where the character of those chosen could be better known, his Majesty was prevailed upon to allow a certain number to be named by each department of France. The effect was, that those departments where men of worth presided, sent very good men; but others sent a set of worthless fellows, who, soon after their arrival at Paris, were received in the Jacobin Club, where they were prompted to make daily accusations, ridiculous in reality, but very fit to excite the people against their comrades of the King's guard, which at length brought about the fatal decree of the 30th of May, by which the whole body of the King's household troops were dismissed, and their commander, the Duke of Brissac, accused and sent prisoner to Orleans.

The formation of these household troops excited the most lively jealousy among the national guards at Paris. Continual disputes occurred between the two corps, which would certainly have occasioned bloodshed, had not the King ordained that they should do duty at the palace alternately; assuring them, at the same time, that the highest proof they could give him of their attachment would be to live amicably together. The new guard did everything in their power to cement a union, so necessary to the safety of the royal family: but it happened too often that some of the national guards, more envious or irritable than the rest, complained that the King and Queen spoke oftener, and with more complacency, to the new guards than to them. The constraint and vexation which their Majesties must have suffered, from those despicable disputes and quarrels, may be easily conceived.

The emigration of the principal civil officers of the house-

hold made it to be expected, that the installation of the guards would be followed by a new civil arrangement in the Court. It was supposed that the King, from a desire of conciliating the minds of the people, would form this establishment in the most popular manner. All those persons, of the one sex as well as the other, who flattered themselves with some situation in the household, were continually teasing the Ministers to prevail on the King and Queen to conclude that business, each of them hinting, that their being appointed would give general satisfaction, and greatly promote the King's popularity.

Convinced, as I was, that the only permanent popularity which the King could acquire must arise from a vigorous conduct, I declined all interference in this affair: but the other Ministers insisted so much upon it in the Council, that the King was at last obliged to explain himself. He expressed neither a great desire to complete his household, nor an unwillingness, but only observed, that the thing appeared to him extremely delicate as well as difficult.

"I feel," said he, "that the Queen cannot, without inconvenience, retain the wives of the émigrés about her, and I have already spoken to her upon the subject: but it cannot be expected that she is to form her society of Madame Pétion, Madame Condorcet, and women of that stamp. With respect to myself, those whose services were most agreeable to me, have deserted me; and amongst those who remain, there are some who are the torment of my life: for instance, there is Chauvelin,<sup>1</sup> who is a spy in my family, always commenting

<sup>1</sup> Bernard François, Marquis de Chauvelin, was the son of a distinguished officer and diplomatist of the reign of Louis XV.

He was attached for several years to the Court of Louis XVI. as Master of the Wardrobe. As stated in the text he was sent as Ambassador to England, accompanied by Talleyrand, a position which

upon what is said. and giving a false account of all that passes.”

“Why, then does not your Majesty dismiss him?” said I.

“From regard to his father’s memory,” answered his Majesty.

After the council was over, I proposed, that, since M. de Chauvelin acted in a manner so reprehensible, his Majesty might dismiss him directly from his service; explaining the motives in the letter by which he signified to him his dismissal; and that if M. de Chauvelin should give himself any airs on the occasion, the King’s letter might be published in the newspapers. But this measure was too severe for the King; and he soon after got rid of M. de Chauvelin, by sending him as Minister Plenipotentiary to England, under the direction of the Abbé Talleyrand de Perigod, Bishop of Autun, who was, in reality, the confidential Minister, although, from particular circumstances, he could not, with propriety, appear at the British Court.

With regard to the household establishment, the King dexterously avoided giving a definitive answer, by ordering each of the Ministers to draw up a separate plan for the regulation of his house, and that of the Queen; and also a list of the persons whom they judged proper to fill the different places.

The Ministers agreed to postpone this discussion, until almanacks could be procured of the principal courts of Europe, from which they might form a plan for the new establish-

he held until the execution of the King terminated his mission. His after career was reputable but not especially brilliant.

He was appointed a member of the Tribunal on its creation in December 1799. Subsequently he was nominated to a Prefecture, and in 1810 to a seat in the Council of State. After the Restoration he sat, always as a member of the Left, in several successive Chambers between 1817 and 1829. He died at the age of 66, in April 1832.

ment; and by this means the King gained time, which was his aim.

The fund of the civil list was divided into twelve equal payments, and placed in the chest of M. Tourteau de Septeuil, who was at once the King's *valet de chambre* and treasurer of the civil list. These payments were made in assignats, except the sum of seventy-five thousand livres, which the King desired he might receive in specie; but at the end of November 1791, the Commissioners of the National Treasury informed M. Septeuil, that upon account of the extreme scarcity of money, they could no longer give the above sum to his Majesty in specie; and that it must in future be paid in assignats.

The King mentioned this in Council, and appeared much affected at the thought that it would not be any longer in his power to pay, in specie, several expenses foreign to his personal service, which he was in the habit of drawing from his private purse.

"I can no longer," said he, "have ten louis at my disposal; for if it be discovered that I endeavour to procure gold, I shall be suspected of a project to escape. Perhaps I shall even be accused of monopolizing the specie of the Kingdom, with a view to depreciate assignats."

I immediately took up my pen, and wrote the following note, which I put into the King's hands, a moment before the Council broke up:

"I have a certain means of procuring for the King, unknown to any one, the sum his Majesty stands in need of; and I beg to receive his orders on the subject."

After the Council was over, the King approached me, and said, with a smile, "It is well. Come and speak to me tomorrow morning."

The next day, on entering the King's apartment, I read,

in his countenance, that my proposal pleased him. His only uneasiness was, his fear of my being exposed to danger. When I had made him easy on this point, he expressed his satisfaction for my zeal, and approved of the plan I proposed for procuring the money.

“It is not for myself I want it,” said he, “for my expenses are paid in assignats; but it is for old servants, whom I have always paid in money; also for charitable uses, and to enable me occasionally to furnish the Queen and my sister (Madame Elizabeth) with a few louis, in exchange for their assignats.”

Before the end of December, I was happy in having it in my power to inform the King that I had four thousand louis d’or at his service. His Majesty approved of my bringing them myself, to avoid having a third person in the confidence; and accordingly I went to the palace several mornings, with five hundred louis in my pocket.

On one of those occasions, I arrived just as the King returned from mass; and only thinking of getting rid of my load, I went up to his Majesty, and begged his permission to follow him; the King looked at me, and after a moment’s hesitation, answered, “Yes, certainly, come.”

This answer was heard by several persons who were in the Council chamber, who smiled, and bowed their head to me in a complimentary manner, for which I could not guess a reason. The Marshal de Noailles, who was present, said to me, taking me by the hand, “I congratulate you.”

“Upon what, Marshal?” replied I.

“Upon the King’s granting you the *entrée* into his chamber.”

“Why I enter every day,” returned I.

“What, when the King is dressing?”

“No,” said I; “but —”

“Well,” interrupted he, “in that case I repeat my congratulations; for at this hour no one is admitted to the King,

except the officers of the wardrobe, and a few particular friends to whom he grants the favour; which, once obtained, is always continued."

"If that be the case," said I, "as I have to speak to the King, I will wait till he is dressed."

I accordingly did so, in spite of the Marshal's advice to the contrary, that the King might not suppose that I took advantage of the service I rendered him, to gain any favour whatever; but when he was dressed, and everybody had left the apartment, I desired the chief *valet* to inform his Majesty that I waited his orders. As soon as I entered, the King inquired what had become of me, and told me that he imagined I was following him. I answered, that when I requested an audience, I had not recollected that it was the hour of his *toilette*; but seeing his Majesty was going to dress, I chose to wait until it was over.

"What, are you afraid of the powder?" said he, smiling.

Without making any answer, I laid the louis on the table, and soon after withdrew.

Meanwhile, in spite of my exertions, insubordination and disorder made a rapid progress in the seaports, particularly at Brest, where the Intendant of Marine, M. Beaupreau, being one of the principal members of the Jacobin Club, regularly communicated to that society all the letters he received from the Minister.

The nomination of M. de La Jaille to the command of one of the vessels, destined to carry succour to St. Domingo, occasioned great disturbances at Brest. That distinguished officer was assaulted by a mob of more than three thousand persons. He received several wounds, and owed his life to the courage of an honest and vigorous pork-merchant, who interposed in his behalf; and by their mutual efforts they defended themselves till the guard came and relieved them both.

*Letter of Queen Marie Antoinette on the birth of her second son, Louis Charles, afterwards Louis XVII, born 27 March 1785, died 8 June 1795.*

I HAVE heard, Monsieur, from Madame de Tourzel, of the part which you have taken in the public rejoicings over the happy event which has given to France an heir to the crown. I thank God for his goodness in fulfilling my hopes, and rejoice in the thought that if He deigns to preserve to us this sweet child, he will one day become the glory and the delight of these good people. I am grateful for the sentiments which you have expressed in these circumstances. They have recalled to me with pleasure the sentiments which you inspired in me in old days when I was at home with my mother.

I assure you, Monsieur le Duc, that since that time my feelings towards you have never varied and that no one more eagerly desires to convince you of their sincerity than

MARIE ANTOINETTE.

VERSAILLES, this 15 April (1782 or 1785).



J'ai appris monsieur, par madame de  
Tourzel la part que vous avez prise à  
l'allégresse publique sur l'heureux événement  
qui vient de donner à la France un héritier  
à la couronne. Je remercie Dieu de la grâce  
qu'il m'a fait d'avoir comblé mes vœux et  
me flatte de l'espoir que s'il daigne nous  
conserver ce cher enfant, il fera un jour  
la gloire et les délices de ce bon peuple.  
J'ai été sensible aux sentiments que vous  
m'avez exprimés dans cette circonstance,  
ils m'ont rappelés avec plaisir ceux que  
vous m'avez autrefois inspirés chez ma mère,  
vous appeurant monsieur le Duc, que  
depuis ce moment ils n'ont pas cessés  
d'être les mêmes pour vous et que  
personne n'a le plus vif desir de vous  
en convaincre que

marie antoinette

versailles ce 15 avril

The Municipality of Brest found no other means of saving M. de La Jaille than that of throwing him into prison, and giving hopes to the atrocious villains, who thirsted for his blood, that this aristocrat would be brought to justice; for aristocracy was the only crime that was laid to his charge.

Upon the account which I gave in Council of this unhappy affair, it was decreed, that immediate orders should be given to the municipality for the enlargement of M. de La Jaille, and the prosecution of the authors of the riot, which had taken place in open day, and of which all the inhabitants of Brest were witnesses. The King also desired to see the brave pork-merchant who had saved M. de La Jaille's life, and ordered the Minister of the Interior to write to him to come to Paris. A few days after this brave and worthy fellow arrived, and desired no other reward than the honour of being presented to the King. His Majesty gave him a very fine sabre, and a gold medal, upon which was engraved, "*Given by the King to l'Auverjeat, pork-merchant, at Brest, as a reward for the generous intrepidity with which he exposed his life to save that of a fellow-citizen.*"

The orders given by the Minister of Justice remained unexecuted. M. de La Jaille was still in prison, under pretence that his being set at liberty would endanger his life; and the members of the Tribunal of Justice, apprehending that the prosecution of the rioters would occasion an attack against themselves, had not yet ventured to commence the process. I in vain represented in Council, and in the Assembly, that the impunity with which such crimes were committed was the motive upon which the officers of the Navy founded their refusal of taking any command. When I gave an account of this fact in Council, M. de Narbonne took me up in the following terms: "Do all the officers refuse? Am I to understand, that if we had any uneasiness with respect to the

disposition of England, and that I demanded a frigate of you, to cruise along our coast, you could not furnish it?"

"It is not frigates that we are in want of," answered I; "but at this moment I should be greatly at a loss to find an officer to command it."

I only mention this circumstance, because of the interpretation which M. de Narbonne afterwards put upon my answer, as will hereafter appear.

It was upon this same occasion that I importuned the *Garde des Sceaux* to take vigorous measures against the judges of Brest; namely, to punish them, or at least dismiss them, if they delayed any longer to render justice to M. de La Jaille. He answered, that in the present circumstances we must use great circumspection and address; because, if we pretended to adhere strictly to the letter of the Constitution, we should soon find ourselves gravelled.

"I know nothing of that," said I, "nor will I enter into any discussion on that point; but this I do know perfectly, that we have no right to attempt to modify or reconstrue the Constitution; our duty is to endeavour to execute it precisely as it is, because without this we can never make it fully known and understood by the nation; and therefore if there really is any gravel in the Constitution, the best thing we can do is to make it manifest to the whole nation, that those who have a right may apply the proper remedies, or make the necessary alterations. After each Minister has for some time followed this plan in his own Department, we may some day go all together to the National Assembly, and lay open our conduct before them, informing them of the efforts we have made to execute the Constitution literally; and that notwithstanding our having used all the legal means in our power, we still had found some insurmountable obstacle, from which it would be apparent that the execution of the Consti-

tution was impossible in some cases, and in others, that it would be pernicious. Depend upon it," continued I, "the Assembly, or at least the nation at large, would thank us for having made this discovery, and consider us as worthy, upright Ministers, and true patriots."

"Yes," rejoined the *Garde des Sceaux*, "but by that means we shall raise against us all the Constitutionals, the Jacobins, the clubs, and we shall have another revolution, worse perhaps than the present one."

"Another revolution we may have," said I; "but one worse than the present is impossible. Of this I am so convinced, that I am determined not to deviate one step from the course that I have mentioned to you."

In the first discourse which I pronounced to the Assembly in the end of October 1791, I announced, that I would not begin the execution of the general plan, until all the decrees were passed respecting the particular laws by which my administration was to be regulated. The motive I alleged for this determination was the importance of preventing the confusion and inconveniences attending an incomplete organization, from creating any prejudice against the new regulations. It could not be doubted but that this was the opinion of the Assembly, after the applause which was given to this part of my discourse.

I waited with great tranquillity for the above-mentioned decrees, which the Committee of the Navy, solely occupied in finding occasions to blame me, were never thinking of. They seemed to have entirely forgotten the necessity of such decrees.

I always kept up the same reserve with the Committee, never going there, and avoiding all correspondence with it; and even when I received a letter from thence, which required any necessary information, instead of answering the President of the Committee, I addressed my explanation to the Presi-

dent of the Assembly, as if I gave it of my own accord, and taking no notice of its being demanded by the Committee. Those gentlemen were enraged at this conduct, at the same time they could not complain, as that would have been reproaching me for my too great fidelity to the Constitution. They one day sent their President to me, upon an affair which greatly interested him. He had himself announced by the title of President of the Committee of the Navy.

“I know no such person,” said I, aloud to the footman who announced him. “Do you know if the gentleman is a member of the Assembly?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Well, if that be the case, announce him by his name.”

This order was punctually obeyed, and rather disconcerted the President, who was near enough to the door to hear what I said.

“You know, sir,” said I to him, “that the Constitution does not authorize us to have any communication with the Committees, consequently you cannot be offended with my precision upon this occasion. You are a member of the Assembly; in that quality my house is open to you, and I shall be always ready to attend to whatever you may have to communicate.”

“I imagined,” said he, “that as your colleagues —”

“My colleagues,” interrupted I, “have undoubtedly good reasons for acting as they do, but for my own part, I have none to deviate from the Constitution: but I shall be ready to attend to you with the same attention and interest as if you were President of all the Committees of the Assembly.”

“I came to speak to you, sir,” said he, “respecting the various offers which have been made for provisions for the Navy. I presume you intend to finish that business.”

“Not yet. It is much less pressing than many others, be-

cause there is already a board of Commissioners, to whom that business is entrusted, who execute their duty very well."

"I mentioned this," resumed he, "only because we are flooded with offers from various companies, desirous of that undertaking, and whose proposals seem advantageous."

"As that regards *me* only," said I, "you may easily get rid of their importunity, by sending them to me. With respect to their proposals, when we are ready for determining, we shall consider which is the most advantageous: but this I am certain of already, that some are of a disgraceful nature, some hints having been given very much resembling bribes, such as allowing a considerable share in the profits, without any advance of money, to some of my friends or relations. I mention this, in the full conviction that you highly disapprove of everything of this kind; and that if the same insulting proposals had been made to any member of the Assembly, they would have rejected them with the same indignation that I have done."

He appeared to me to deserve this compliment, for he really had the countenance of an honest man: but I was far from having the same opinion of all his colleagues, and particularly of the members of the Committee of the Navy. I ought, however, to acknowledge, that there were men of probity amongst them, who, without having any personal acquaintance with me, always took my part, and had the candour to convey to me all the intelligence which they believed could be of any use.

Some time after, I was informed, in the middle of the night, that the account of my conversation with the President had greatly exasperated the majority of the Committee against me. They considered my postponing the decision on the various proposals above-mentioned as a proof of unwillingness to execute the Constitution, and of an inclination to overturn the

present system of the Marine Department; in consequence of which the Committee had hastily agreed on the principal articles of a report, to be laid next day before the Assembly, as the foundation of a decree of accusation against me.

I knew too well the dispositions of the Assembly, with regard to me, not to apprehend that this report would be agreed upon without my being heard; and the decree of accusation once passed, it would have been difficult to have obtained the revocation. It was therefore more prudent to prevent the report from being made; and I gained this point by easy means. I immediately wrote a letter to the President of the Assembly, in which I complained bitterly that none of the decrees were passed which I stood in need of, to terminate the formation of the Marine Department, although I had given a sketch of those decrees in my discourse pronounced last October, and that the Assembly had acknowledged the necessity of passing them, before the new regulations of the Navy could be made; and I expressed myself particularly hurt, as those who were unacquainted with this circumstance would impute the delay given to the measures entirely to my want of diligence.

This letter, which was read in the Assembly at the moment when the Committee of Marine were going to make the report, in order to found the decree of accusation against me, entirely disconcerted the orator and his adherents. Their declamations, and the steps they had taken to insure the majority of votes were rendered thoroughly ridiculous.

They revenged themselves a few days later, by having it decreed, that whereas the reading of letters from the Ministers in the Assembly occasioned much loss of time, henceforth they should be laid before the Committee, which would only give an account of such as were of sufficient consequence to merit the attention of the Assembly.

This decree, by which they flattered themselves they should



have the power of weakening or suppressing, at pleasure, our means of defence, gave me no uneasiness, because the Ministers always retained the right of speaking in the Assembly, by which I expected to be able to repel the attacks made against me.

This continual warfare would only have been an amusement to the Ministers, if they had not been more scrupulous than their enemies in the means of defence they employed: but the practice peculiar to the Jacobins, of pursuing, without hesitation, the most criminal paths, when necessary to gain their end, gave them an advantage which men of principle had no means of resisting.

“You have nothing to fear from the aristocrats,” said Mirabeau, one day, to his adherents; “they neither pillage, burn, nor assassinate. What, then, can they do against you? Let them go on with their declamations; their fate is sealed.”

Mirabeau was certainly in the right. He might also have added, that men of probity would not permit their worst enemies to be assassinated, even when it could not be imputed to them, to have promoted or countenanced the crime in any way.

This was what the Intendant of Brest experienced on a remarkable occasion, which I cannot pass over in silence. Towards the end of the year 1791, at the time of the armament destined to carry succour to St. Domingo, Redon de Beaupreau, Intendant of Brest, sent me, according to custom, a list of persons, whom he recommended as civil officials in the expedition. I was much surprised to find in this list the name of Bellanger, one of the chiefs of the Jacobin Club, who had figured in all the insurrections at Brest, and promoted the assassinations. Beaupreau himself, in the notes which he addressed, six months before, to my predecessor, had always represented this Bellanger as a most atro-

scious character, whom he intended to turn out of his office, as soon as it could be done without danger. I did not hesitate to efface Bellanger's name from the list of civil officers; and when I announced this to Beaupreau, I took care to let him know that it was the note he sent to my predecessor, of which I gave him the extract, which had determined me.

I had no doubt but that my letter would throw Beaupreau into great embarrassment, but I had no idea that it would expose him to be assassinated; and I was surprised, by a letter I received from M. de Marigni, who commanded the Navy at Brest, and who had the goodness to transmit to me the humble and pressing supplications, which Beaupreau did not dare to send me himself, upon Bellanger's name being effaced from the list.

M. de Marigni informed me, that the life of Beaupreau was in my hands, as Bellanger would cause him to be assassinated, as soon as he was informed of my motive for refusing to appoint him. And although M. de Marigni had been the object of the Intendant's persecution from the commencement of the Revolution, he had the generosity to intercede for his enemy, and solicit me to replace the name of Bellanger in the list.

Beaupreau also employed in this mediation M. Pouget, an ancient Intendant of the Navy, of great merit, in whom he knew I had much confidence. The letter which Beaupreau wrote to him upon this occasion was full of protestations of repentance for what he termed past errors, and assurances that he would conduct himself better in future. Far from retracting his word respecting Bellanger, he added, "that he was a monster who deserved to be hanged: but that he had included him in the list of civil officers to get rid of him from Brest, where his patriotic frenzy occasioned the greatest disorder, and he was in hopes, that aboard whatever vessel he

was employed, his conduct would be such that he would be tossed into the sea."

I should certainly have been excusable in adhering to my first determination of refusing to put him again on the list, however fatal the consequences might have proved to Beaupreau; and I might also have deprived this Intendant of his place, for his prevarication in recommending a person to a confidential employment, whom he had denounced to the Minister, a few months before, as a wretch capable of every crime. But as it was impossible, at that period, to appoint a man of probity to his situation at Brest, without exposing him to the greatest danger, I preferred saving the life of Beaupreau, although, in so doing, I risked my responsibility, by approving the appointment of a villain like Bellanger.

## CHAPTER XIII.

Bad success of the last naval promotions.—Resignation of almost all the officers.—The Duke of Orleans accepts the rank of admiral.—Sentiments he expressed to me upon the occasion.—He waits upon the King.—He returns to the palace the Sunday following, and is insulted.—The Count d'Estaing accepts of the rank of admiral, with restrictions.—His ridiculous demands and conduct.—The deputy Rouyer protects him.—Letter of Rouyer to the King.—M. de Peynier, after having accepted the new rank with which he was invested, refuses the command of the Navy at Brest, and gives in his resignation.

THE promotion made by M. Thevenard did not give satisfaction in the Navy. I never expected it would. How could it be imagined that brave officers, accustomed to the respect of the sailors, and to have their orders obeyed with submission, should ever consent to become the instruments of their own degradation? The profession which had been honoured by their talents and their courage had now nothing to offer but dangers without glory, and service without utility, since disobedience and revolt were not only tolerated, but encouraged and regarded as marks of patriotism. Accordingly almost all the officers sent me their resignation, upon the receipt of my letter announcing their promotion. The Duke of Orleans and the Count d'Estaing<sup>1</sup> were amongst the few exceptions.

<sup>1</sup> Admiral Count Charles Louis Hector d'Estaing, who had a distinguished part in the American War of Independence and had subsequently commanded the National Guard of Versailles, was now 64 years of age.

In February 1792, he did not accept unconditionally the appointment of Admiral under the new scheme of Naval organization. He

The Duke of Orleans<sup>2</sup> was not satisfied with writing to me that he had accepted the rank of Admiral; he likewise paid me a visit; and, amongst other matters, he assured me, that he set the higher value upon the favour which the King had conferred on him, because it gave him the means of convincing his Majesty how much his sentiments had been calumniated. This declaration was made with an air of great

asked rather for military rank, pleading that he could be more useful to the country on shore than at sea.

He was granted by the Legislative Assembly, on the 6th March 1792, the honorary rank of Admiral, without prejudice to any military command which might be in future bestowed upon him. He never commanded again either at sea or on land. He was summoned as a witness during the trial of Marie Antoinette and behaved with propriety in giving his evidence on the invasion of Versailles by the Paris mob in October 1789, which was attributed as a crime to the Queen, as indeed was every other suffering she had endured. Consequently he was himself sent before the Revolutionary Tribunal as one of a "batch" of thirty-three persons, of both sexes, of all ages and of all ranks, from a Duke to a tobaceonist, all charged in the same indictment as being accomplices in the plots of the traitor Capet and Marie Antoinette. He was guillotined with the other victims on the 28th April 1794.

<sup>2</sup>In making any attempt to judge of the sinister part played by Louis Philippe, Joseph, Duke d'Orleans, during the Revolution, it must be remembered that from his earliest youth, he had been brought up in a sort of hereditary opposition to the King. Early in his life he adopted, or affected, the love of advanced opinions and novel fashions. From America he imported attractive theories of emancipation and equality; from England, Free-Masonry, racing and Anglomania in general. In both the Assemblies of Notables in 1787 and 1788 he was put forward to oppose the King and his Ministers, and he was the more eager to do so since he was singularly vain and dearly loved the adulation and popularity which opposition won for him. At the first meeting of the States-General, while the King met with cold applause and the Queen with none, the Duke d'Orleans was applauded with endless vociferation and enthusiasm, and such applause was perhaps the only thing that he had left to care for in the world. It is certain that he paid dearly for it in money as well as in reputation. The question as to exactly what part Orleans played in the early days of the Revolution, is still an open one. He, himself, and only in his forty-second year, was a blasé,

openness and sincerity, and accompanied with the warmest protestations of loyalty. "I am very unfortunate," said he, "without deserving to be so. A thousand atrocities have been laid to my charge, of which I am completely innocent. I have been supposed guilty by many, merely because I have disdained to enter into any justification of myself from crimes,

eynical, prematurely old debauché, but he had still an immense fortune and he was in the hands of those who knew how to use it. He was moreover, when not merely a passive instrument, ready to go far in his desire to become Regent of the Kingdom or citizen King, such as his son became in 1830. So far, in fact, as he any longer cared for fishing, he preferred to fish in dirty water. Behind him were a powerful and unscrupulous group of politicians, of widely different spheres of influence.

In the Assembly his interests were in the able hands of Adrian Dupont, who exercised considerable influence over such members as Barnave and the Laneths and who even brought Mirabeau within the dangerous circle. In speaking to Mounier during this brief period of his career, Mirabeau said, "Good God, my dear man, who said we were not to have a King? What does it matter whether his name is Louis or Philip? You would not have that brat (the Dauphin) I suppose." In private life the Duke's secretary, Choderlos de Laelos, was ever ready to whisper means and measures of bringing popularity and promoting the flight, the death or the deposition, of Louis XVI.; while in the street, the Marquis de Saint Huruge, "bull Huruge" as he was called, was an ideal demagogue, with brazen throat and lying tongue, ready for every riot and always at the head of each as it came.

Thus in each of the earlier outbreaks of the Revolution, from the pillage of Reveillon's house to the march to Versailles, the agency or the wealth of the Duke can be clearly traced. No wonder that, to use Mirabeau's expression, the Duke d'Orleans became the slop pail in which is thrown all the filth of the Revolution. His conduct during the days of the 5th and 6th October, above all the cowardly manner in which he allowed himself to be driven from France by La Fayette (who was too upright a man not to abhor Orleans and all his sycophants and followers), on a fictitious mission to England, put an end to his influence. Mirabeau after this spoke of him in untranslatable terms of contempt.

Once more his party tried to bring him forward. After the King's return from Varennes, there was a serious movement in favour of his dethronement. The petition which was designed to be

of which I have a real horror. You are the first Minister to whom I ever said as much, because you are the only one whose character ever inspired me with confidence. You will soon have an opportunity of judging whether my conduct gives the lie to my words."

He pronounced these last words with a voice and manner signed and presented at the meeting of the Champs de Mars on the 17th July 1791, is said to have been drawn up by Laelos. But at the period referred to by Bertrand, it is obvious that the Duke was genuinely anxious for a reconciliation, which was prevented only by the violent, and under the circumstances criminally stupid, insults to which he was subjected in the Tuileries on the 1st January 1792.

Possibly with a view to self-preservation, or moved by the lingering embers of ambition, Orleans became a candidate for election to the Convention, and under the patronage of Marat, was elected at the foot of the list of Jacobin representatives for Paris. A few days later he found it necessary to change the title of d'Orleans, and at the suggestion of the Municipality, he formally took the name of Philippe Égalité.

The trial of Louis XVI. followed. Even Robespierre was heard to say that Égalité was the one member who might fairly plead an excuse for not voting, but there were darker spirits than Robespierre in that Assembly, and Égalité, still clinging to life, could not abstain. It is very probable that he thought that such a vote as he gave, would secure his present safety. A man so cynical as he, was capable of thinking this, but, if he did, he underestimated the humanity of even his Jacobin colleagues.

When he mounted the Tribune and declared "Solely concerned to do my duty and convinced that all those who have in any way attacked in the past, or shall attack in the future the Sovereignty of the People, deserves to die, I vote for death," instead of approving shouts he heard only murmurs of loathing and horror.

His name hardly appears after this in the Journal of the Convention. On the 6th April 1793, a decree was issued ordering that all members of the family of Bourbon should be detained as hostages for the Republic.

Égalité was arrested on the following day and imprisoned at Marseilles. Six months later, he was brought back to Paris and sent before the Revolutionary Tribunal 6th November 1793, charged with having conspired with the traitors Mirabeau and Dumouriez and of having aspired to Royalty. He defended himself, not without some remnants of ability and self-respect, but his condemnation was of



which convinced me he meant them as an answer to the air of incredulity with which I listened to him. I answered him, that I was so much afraid of weakening the force of his expressions, in reporting them to the King, as he desired I should, that I begged of him to deliver them himself to his Majesty. He replied, that it was precisely what he wished; and that if he could flatter himself that the King would receive him, he would go to the Court next day.

I gave his Majesty an account, the same evening at the Council, of the visit I had received from the Duke of Orleans, and all that had passed; adding, that I could not help being convinced of the sincerity of his professions. The King resolved to receive him, and the following day had a conversation with him of more than half an hour, with which his Majesty appeared to be well satisfied.

“I am of your opinion,” said he to me, “that he returns to us with sincerity, and that he will do all that depends on him to repair the mischiefs which have been committed in his name, and in which, very possibly, he has not had so great a share as we have suspected.”

The following Sunday (1st January 1792) the Duke of Orleans came to the King's levee, where he met with the most mortifying reception from the courtiers, who were ignorant of what had passed, and from the royalists, who usually came on that day to pay their court to the royal family. They pressed round him, treading designedly upon his toes, and pushing him towards the door. When he went into the Queen's apartment, where the cloth was already laid, as soon as he appeared, they cried out on every side, “Let nobody approach the dishes,” insinuating that he might throw poison into them.

course arranged beforehand. The same afternoon he was taken with four other victims and guillotined. His last words are said to have been “*Dépêchez vous*” — make haste!

The insulting murmurs which his presence excited, forced him to retire without having seen any of the royal family. He was pursued to the top of the stairs; and as he was going down, some spit over the staircase upon him. He hastened out, filled with rage and indignation, and convinced that the King and Queen were the authors of these outrages, of which they were not only ignorant, but extremely concerned when they were informed of them. From that moment the Duke of Orleans conceived implacable hatred, and vowed vengeance against the King and Queen. He kept this oath but too well. I happened to be at Court that day, and was an eye-witness to the scene I have just related.

Upon the Count d'Estaing's appointment to the rank of Admiral, he wrote me a letter of eight pages, expressed in such ambiguous terms, that I should not have been able to comprehend it, if M. de Montmorin, whom he solicited to recommend his request to me, had not explained it more clearly. I perceived that he was very well pleased to be Admiral, but that he objected to being so upon the same footing with others; and he wished that a new place, under the title of *Admiral Extraordinary*, should be created for him; asserting, that something of the same kind had been done when he obtained the rank of chief of a squadron (Commodore). He desired also to have it expressly ascertained, that his rank of Admiral was not to be an obstruction to his attaining that of *Marshal de France*. I answered him, that the Duke of Orleans being as yet the only Admiral, and even the only officer of the marine, who had accepted the rank with which he was invested, I could not well propose to the Assembly to create a place of Admiral Extraordinary, until all the ordinary Admirals had accepted their commissions. This reason did not satisfy him. He had, he said, very good friends in the Assembly, and particularly in the Committee of Ma-

rine, and he was certain, that if I would lay his request before them, it would be granted. I advised him to draw it up in the form of a memorial. I consented even to receive it, and to send it to the Assembly, but without adding any observation of my own. I was informed, a few days after, that the principal person on whose influence he relied, in the Committee of Marine, was precisely that Rouyer,<sup>3</sup> who was the most violent of all my antagonists, and, fortunately for me, the most foolish. The Count d'Estaing went almost every day to the house of this man, sometimes waiting two whole hours in his antechamber; and he never addressed him by any other name than "my dear captain," either when he spoke or wrote to him, although he never had served in that rank. This he probably did with the view of appearing to favour Rouyer's pretensions to the cross of St. Louis.

Rouyer took care to make himself named, by the marine committee, "Reporter of M. d'Estaing's demand," and pronounced a very emphatic discourse in his favour, on the 6th of March 1792, to the Assembly; in consequence of which it was decreed that M. d'Estaing might act as Admiral, without preventing him from obtaining his rank in the army, but on condition that he should receive only the emoluments of the situation which he actually did occupy.

<sup>3</sup> Jean Pascal Rouyer, Deputy for the Department of the Herault in the Legislative Assembly, the Convention and the Corps Legislatif, was a member of the Girondist party. He voted for the death of the King, was included in the proscriptions of the 31st May 1793, and was placed "Hors la Loi" on the 3d October of the same year. On December 9th 1794 the seventy-three Girondists who had survived the Terror, were recalled to the Convention. Rouyer, who was one of these survivors, had the satisfaction of proposing the Decree of Accusation against the three ex-Members of the Committee of Public Safety, Collot d'Herbois, Billaud Varennes and Barere. In the Corps Legislatif his name appears only as a somewhat obscure member of the Right.

It disappears altogether after April 1797, though he lived for many years and died at Brussels on the 20th October 1819.

I was informed of these circumstances by his clerk, who told me, at the same time, that the man's ambition was no longer limited to the cross of St. Louis, but that he now aspired to the rank of first Minister, and intended to make the proposal to the King by a letter, which he was to deliver himself, accompanied by two chevaliers of St. Louis; and that he had been tormenting this same clerk, for a week past, to compose a letter for him; and still insisted on it, in spite of the man's expostulation against such a design.

I was, on the contrary, of opinion, that it would be very advantageous to the King to be in possession of the means of exposing a knave of this kind; therefore I advised the clerk not to defer writing the letter any longer, and to make it extravagant and ridiculous, but at the same time in such a style as would impose upon Rouyer, and prevent him from seeing the end intended. Nothing was easier. The clerk afterwards showed me a rough sketch of the letter, with which I was, upon the whole, very well pleased. The few alterations I suggested were soon made, and I demanded, as a proof of zeal, which might be useful to the clerk, that he would give me a copy of the letter, as soon as Rouyer had determined to write it. The clerk brought me the copy next day, telling me, at the same time, that Rouyer was so enchanted with the letter, that he already fancied himself first Minister; and that he was now in search of two chevaliers of St. Louis to accompany him, when he went to present the letter to the King, "and to warrant, by their presence, that he was capable of *performing all that he had promised to his Majesty.*" This sentence, which was at the end of the original letter, was not inserted in that which was delivered to the King on the 17th of March 1792, and afterwards found in the iron cabinet, because Rouyer was forced to suppress it, after having

sought in vain, for the space of two months, for two chevaliers of St. Louis to accompany him.

Before the King received the letter sent by Rouyer, therefore, he was perfectly acquainted with the contents, by means of the copy that I had shown him, which had amused him very much.

This performance is so very curious, that I cannot avoid inserting it. Here it is, exactly as it was printed in the King's process, in the third collection, page 104:

*Letter from Rouyer to the King.*

*"Sire,*

"A citizen, invested by the people with the painful and glorious power of giving them laws, and of watching over their happiness, requests your attention upon the present state of the Kingdom, and desires to propose to you the means of insuring its glory and felicity. Deeply impressed with the evils which rend my country, I ought also to count up its innumerable resources. I have probed its wounds, and calculated its force. I have compared all, examined all, and foreseen all. I can now announce to your Majesty, that upon you alone depends the execution of the laws, and consequently the security of the Empire. You can, in a word, heal its wounds, dissipate its alarms, and annihilate its perils: you can restore to France that peace which has fled, and that dignity which ought to belong to her. You can restore to the Throne that national love which is its only security, and that lustre which is its due.

"Sire, in order to execute this noble design, I only require the direction of the means which the law entrusts to you, and to be empowered to employ the force which the Constitution has placed in your hands; and I offer my head in pledge of the sincerity of my promises, the wisdom of my plans, and

the certainty of success. Do not imagine, Sire, that zeal for public good has disturbed my imagination, or that the illusions of self-love make me overrate my own powers: I am sure of performing *successfully* what I undertake *boldly*. Permit me to enjoy the consoling hope of restoring your happiness (for yours depends upon that of the State). I know that numerous obstacles oppose the exertion of public power, and combat, without ceasing, the benefits of the law. I see everywhere sedition in action, and authority hiding its head: anarchy elevating itself, and a government which dares not suppress it. Your Ministers, Sire, present this fatal picture too often to your view: they tell you of the troubles, without explaining the causes of them; and if they ever conceived the idea of terminating them, they have always been deterred by weak obstacles or exaggerated dangers. But I know these dangers, and I set them at defiance. Weakness can only calculate them, but genius overcomes them; leaving it to history to describe the dangers after they are annihilated.

“This, Sire, is the glorious labour to which I invite you, offering you, at the same time, the tribute of my courage, of my moral and physical powers, and of my profound respect. Receive the homage of a citizen, who perhaps may have been falsely represented to you as a man of an ardent character, an enemy to order and royalty, but whose actions shall everywhere proclaim, that nature and honour have engraven on his soul the love of his Country and of his King.

“Sire, I still repeat to your Majesty, that I engage to re-establish, in two months, the royal authority, peace within the Kingdom, consideration without, and public felicity, if you condescend to adopt the counsel which my zeal shall dictate to you. I desire not pomp, nor honours, nor any reward but the glory of saving my country. You can greatly con-



tribute to it; and I would willingly think that you only require to be informed of the means. I shall discover them to your Majesty: I shall reveal what your Ministers conceal from you, or inform you of what they were ignorant. You yourself shall behold the state of your empire; you shall appreciate the men whom the law permits you to command; you shall hear those whom the people distinguish by their confidence; and if you observe the conduct which I shall point out, you will find the suspicions and alarms, which have been sowed around you, dissipated by the love and respect of all Frenchmen. You will find the power which the Constitution gives you increased by opinion, supported by esteem, firmly established by the confidence of all the citizens; and the Queen, partaking with your Majesty in the fruits of general happiness, will then feel, that the only pure felicity is that which arises from benevolence and virtue. But this plan cannot be executed, unless your Majesty is animated with the sincere desire of preserving together, in all its parts, the Constitution of the State. And if, in spite of the outcry of fanatical priests, the threats of emigrants, and the conduct of foreign princes, you are not absolutely convinced of the necessity of braving this insignificant league which is forming against us, I shall be much surprised; because, for my own part, Sire, I am so well convinced of our own force and resources, that when I cast my eyes upon the enemies that menace us, they excite no other sentiment than that of pity.

“Raised to the elevation of liberty and equality, those colossal divinities who trample under foot all intrigues and all passions, I extend my view over the Courts of Europe, and I am certain of having it in my power to force them to a peace.

“Yes, Sire, you may avoid a foreign war, or at least restore internal peace, by the success of our arms: you may



render your authority more revered, more august, more extensive: you may become the tutelary god of the French nation. Through you, religion will triumph over the indecent dissensions which exist between the refractory and the constitutional priests: through you, reason and justice shall at last penetrate the souls of aristocrats, and you will bring them back to the bosom of their country, disarmed by remorse. I shall silently enjoy the fruits of my advice, and of your strength of mind. Happy in the general happiness, I shall direct the public gratitude to you alone, and my heart shall be satisfied. The ambitious, who wish to elevate the edifice of their own fortune upon the wreck of Monarchy; the hot-headed and extravagant, who imagine that liberty can only be established upon broken sceptres; all parties, all cabals shall bend before the Throne raised upon the basis of the Constitution. Popular Assemblies, whose rise you were made to fear without foundation, shall then meet only to offer you their thanks and praise.

“This, Sire, is a faithful representation of the change which you have it in your power to operate, by the means which I have unfolded. Distrust ought not to find a place in your heart, and make you reject a faithful subject. Were I in the same perplexing circumstances on the Throne, where birth and the law has placed you, and if the same support were offered me, no inward prejudice, nor malicious suggestion from without, no consideration whatever, should influence me to reject it.

“I attend your Majesty’s decision with respectful confidence. My conduct and my letter demand an examination. Let it be as severe as reason, and as impartial as justice. But if it does not procure an answer, as I think that the fate of the State depends upon it, permit me to summon, in this extraordinary cause, those whose dearest interest it in-

cludes, and submit my letter to the judgment of the French Nation.

(Signed) ROUYER, *Citoyen.*"

Paris, March 17, 1792.

A spirit of insubordination and revolt had manifested itself in all the principal seaports, and on board many vessels of war, ever since the year 1789. Many officers had suffered outrage and personal insult from the sailors; so that the naval commanders in general were disgusted with the service; and I really imagined, that the Duke of Orleans and the Count d'Estaing would have been the only officers of high rank willing to serve, while the Navy was subjected to the new regulations. I was therefore greatly surprised when I received a letter from M. de Peynier,<sup>4</sup> an officer of merit, who had formerly been *chef d'escadre*, informing me that he accepted, with all possible gratitude, the new rank to which the King had promoted him. Some of this gentleman's friends, however, were persuaded that his acceptance of employment in the present circumstances was entirely owing to his having lived, for a long time, at a remote castle which belonged to him in the mountains of Bigorre, and to his being quite ignorant of the present state of the Navy. They wished, therefore, that I should keep his acceptance secret, until that was laid open to him. But as at this time I was accused of retarding the nomination to employments in my department, on purpose to spread the opinion that it would be impossible to fit out a fleet, or maintain a navy, according to the present establishment, I did not choose to let this opportunity slip

<sup>4</sup> The Count de Peynier, a Rear Admiral in the French Navy, held the post of Lieutenant-Governor of Hayti for some years. He returned to France in 1791.

As here related, he was offered the Command of the Post of Brest, which he ultimately refused. He died in retirement in 1795.

of proving the falsehood of such an opinion; for which reason I informed the Council, that very day, of the letter I had received from M. de Peynier; and after having mentioned him to the King with the praise he merited, I proposed that he should be promoted to the immediate command at Brest, instead of M. de la Grandiere, who had refused it. This proposal was approved of by the whole Council, but had no other effect than to justify me, in the eyes of the public, from the calumny above mentioned; for M. de Peynier having, no doubt, been informed of the actual state of the Navy, in the interval between his writing to me and receiving the letter from the King, not only refused the command at Brest, but also retracted his acceptance of the place appointed for him in the late promotion.

In other circumstances, this conduct of M. de Peynier would have been very censurable: but how can we blame officers, who have often shown their courage and zeal for the service of their King and country, for refusing to expose themselves uselessly to the danger of being insulted, and even assassinated, by those very sailors, whose duty it was to respect and obey them? Convinced as I was, and am still, that the chief force of the French Navy consists in the talents of the officers, I thought it my duty to pay all possible attention to their personal safety; and being likewise persuaded that many of the officers would have given in their resignation, if their attendance had been rigorously insisted on, at a time when there was not an absolute necessity for it, and when the sailors were in a state of mutiny, I wished to use every means to quiet the minds of the latter in the first place. I am still persuaded that, so far from being contrary to the oath I had sworn to be faithful to the Constitution, this conduct was the only one I could adopt, conformable to the interests of the State, and, of course, to true patriotism.

## PRIVATE MEMOIRS OF

### CHAPTER XIV.

Motives of the resolution which I took of writing down the speeches I pronounced in the Assembly.—A speech which I pronounced upon the state of the colony of St. Domingo.—Effect which it produced.

THE incorrect manner in which a sentence, which I had pronounced at the famous sitting of the 10th of November, had been reported, and the denunciation to which I had been exposed, by publishing an explanation of that mistake, made me resolve to put into writing every speech that I should afterwards make in the Assembly, and to read it there from the manuscript. By adhering strictly to this resolution, I have suffered less than otherwise I might, from the extreme malevolence which prevailed against me. It happened to me, one day, that I went to the Assembly with a speech which had employed me part of the night, and which I had but just finished; so that I had not time to write it out fair, and read it from the first sketch. It related to the disasters of St. Domingo. When I pronounced it, the Assembly decreed its being printed, and ordered me to leave it. I answered, that I could not, because it was only a first sketch, and so blotted, that nobody except myself could make it out; but that I would send a copy next day to the Committee. One of the secretaries observed, that a copy might be made out directly by a clerk, and that it might be next day returned to me. I persisted in my refusal, in spite of the murmurs of the Assembly; giving, as an additional reason, that the King had not yet seen this discourse, and that it was my duty to

show it to him as soon as possible: but that if they feared my making any alterations, they might mark the erasures and references. After having said this, and shown my blotted minutes to the secretary, who had come from his place to take them from me, I put it into my pocket very deliberately, and then rose up to withdraw. A general murmur and noise immediately took place in the Assembly.

“The Minister does not leave his speech,” cried one.

“He has put it in his pocket,” said another.

“He is carrying it away,” exclaimed a third.

“Yes, unquestionably, I am carrying it away,” said I, with firmness, turning to those who were exclaiming, “but it is with no design to suppress it.”

The cry ceased, and I went out.

This speech is connected with events of too important a nature to be omitted; I have therefore thought it absolutely necessary to insert it at large, as follows:

“Gentlemen, I formerly gave you an account of the measures taken by his Majesty for sending succours to the inhabitants of St. Domingo, as soon as their calamities and dangers were known: these succours, insufficient of themselves, depended for success upon their celerity only, and upon their being followed with far more important aids. But before this could be determined upon it was necessary to know exactly the true causes of the disturbances which had brought about this great catastrophe. I have neglected nothing to discover them, because this discovery can alone direct the measures calculated to prevent their recurrence. Some accuse the proprietors of intending to betray the island to the English; ‘and,’ they add, ‘that since the feudal system is abolished in France, the planters justly tremble for the destruction of the more barbarous tyranny which exists in the colonies: they foresee that the classic land of liberty and equality will countenance slav-

ery nowhere; therefore they wish to break asunder all ties with it.' They quote in support of this, the inconsiderate steps of some individuals, and some speeches made in moments of anger, by men, whose passions being ardent from living under a burning sun, are the more easily exasperated by the slightest contradiction, to which they have been entirely unaccustomed.

“Others, on the contrary, imagine that the causes of the evils are incendiary publications, which are dispersed throughout the colonies with the design of exciting the negroes to revolt, and the correspondences which have for a long time been kept up between the mulattoes and a society of pretended philanthropists, whose system, they assert, is destructive of all colonial property. It may, indeed, be easily conceived, that ever since the first establishment of our colonies in the West Indies, a people of a humane and liberal way of thinking, and who always deserved to be free, have regretted that the advantages resulting from those establishments depended on the slavery of a large portion of their fellow-creatures. This feeling of a generous nation, which does them the more honour, that it springs spontaneously in their breast without reflection, and which is even estimable when it exceeds the bounds of prudence, must influence all Frenchmen; and a milder and more humane treatment of the negroes has been the consequence.

“The result of a sentiment so natural and wise stopped here: but the spirit of philosophy, which in France was more ambitious, determined to extend its conquests. It maintained, with all its powers of reasoning, the theory of a sentiment which it was perhaps enough to have felt. According to this system, the colonies, these possessions, for which principles were disregarded, and humanity shed tears, were not acquisitions so important as avarice believed, but, on the contrary,

were ruinous to the State which had the misfortune to possess them. It was thought possible to replace them by possessions nearer at hand, in a climate of the same temperature, such as Africa or the islands of the Mediterranean. The day must come, when it will be necessary to abandon these distant colonies, inhabited by planters, whose ingratitude and infidelity are already apparent. These united considerations made a voluntary abandoning of these islands seem only an anticipation of an event which is inevitable.

“Our wiser neighbours made similar calculations relative to their colonies in North America, and demonstrated, by the sums expended in maintaining them, that they were burdensome: but these wise reflections only occurred after their colonies were lost. Besides, the colonies in question were continental, and had no resemblance, except in their name, to the colonies of the American Archipelago. This difference did not strike every mind; and when the interests of commerce appeared to favour the interests of humanity, the number of philanthropists was augmented by the addition of many, whose sensibility could only be excited by motives very different from those of philanthropy.

“The proprietors of West India estates assert, that the sanguinary scenes, of which they are the victims, originate in the errors and sophistry of the pretended philanthropists. ‘Follow,’ say they, ‘with attention the effects of the zeal which first proposed the total abolition of slavery, and the complete freedom of the negroes, and afterwards, under the pretence of moderation, but in fact to hasten their schemes, only insisted upon the suppression of the *slave trade*; and lastly, by a more artful and skilful manœuvre, appeared to have confined the plan to changing the fate of the mulattoes, in order to ruin us with more certainty. Is it possible to conceive that a system, founded upon humanity, could produce such cruel



effects? Does not the history of these countries furnish us with an anecdote, which, by analogy and by comparison, would honour the most delicate philanthropists? Was it not owing to the humane and pious Las Casas, that America was filled with negroes? Was it not this virtuous Spaniard, who, melted by the misery which his countrymen heaped upon the natives, in compelling them to hard labour, flew to Africa to seek men who, already devoted to slavery, might perform the tasks without any aggravation of their misery, and with only a change of their masters; and in a climate similar to their own, might replace the feeble Indians, who, unfit for fatigue, sank under their labour and their chains? Although this pious missionary repented of the means which his mistaken humanity suggested, it nevertheless is true, that in order to save a few Caribs who survived so much wretchedness, he devoted millions of individuals to slavery, by the avarice which the immense market for slaves excited in Africa. Let us suppose that the modern philanthropists are actuated by as pure motives, yet it would be no less true, that by attempting to abolish the slavery of the blacks, they would reduce to misery and despair five or six millions of whites, who are their fellow-citizens, their friends, and their brothers, and would overthrow one of the strongest pillars of the power of the nation. It would be no less true, that they would not even effect the happiness of those whom they wish to serve; for, in order to accomplish this, it would be necessary to have the concurrence of all those States who possess colonies; and that the abolition of slavery should be the simultaneous decree of all the powers who are interested: and without this universal agreement, both in will and deed, which is supposed so easy to obtain, the colonies would gain nothing but the choice of a protector, and the slaves the change of a master. The slaves may again succeed, as has been the case already

in many places, in murdering us, our families, and all whom they consider as their masters, but the effect will be merely to procure them new masters, much more cruel than us; for in this vessel, in this kind of immense galley, which fate has placed in the Atlantic ocean, and to the benches of which mistaken philanthropy leads the Africans, chaining them to the oars, the most successful insurrections of the crew would only tend to embitter their lot.'

"Such, gentlemen, are the attacks and defences which are employed by the planters and their antagonists. It is with a view to procure light to myself as a Minister that I have examined what the real causes were which excited the commotions of St. Domingo, in order to employ the most effectual means of quieting them, and preventing their return.

"With regard to the accusations against the proprietors, of intending to give themselves up to the English or to the Americans, I know nothing, and I have seen nothing to make me suspect so criminal a design. Besides, how was this to be effected? By exciting the negroes to insurrection, by impelling them to ravage the whole country? In offering themselves to a new sovereign, why would they choose to present only a heap of ashes and ruins? With regard to the project of their claiming independence, there is no fact to prove that they had so extravagant a project. Their situation, their weakness, and their very nature announce, that to them dependence is a duty, and absolutely necessary. They have even been accused of intending to bring about a counter-revolution. Surely those who cannot credit the possibility of effecting a counter-revolution in France, must consider the attempting it, at the distance of 1,800 leagues from the mother country, as decidedly impossible. It would excite ridicule, if the spectacle of so much misery could permit the mind to receive any other impression but that of grief.

“With regard to the accusation pointed against the partisans of the freedom of the negroes, I cannot dissemble that I have discovered that this is far better founded. But whatever is the cause of these disasters, by what means can they be repaired, and how can their return be prevented?

“What is most useful for us is certainly a knowledge of our true interests, and of our commercial intercourse with the colonies, since ignorance on these points has been the chief source of our errors and our calamities. Our sugar colonies should be considered as so many manufactures, established at the distance of eighteen hundred leagues from the mother country, and the mother country as a company of capitalists, who have defrayed the expenses of these establishments of agriculture and industry, by originally founding, by maintaining, and by protecting them. Every individual in the mother country is a party in this important speculation. To share its benefits, it is only requisite to be born in France. All French citizens, yes, I say all of them, are interested in its prosperity, although under different titles. Some as cultivators or proprietors of land. This class labour the ground, partly to furnish necessaries for these distant consumers, and would be ruined without this important market for their crops. Others, as being skilled in some ingenious art, which is exercised for the fabrication of goods for the colonies, which, without them, could never be sold. Others, as merchants, navigators, and coasting traders, &c., form a third class, who are employed in transporting the goods of the two first. Whatever situation an individual in this company occupies, whatever money or talent he brings to it, from the industrious labourer to the idle capitalist, from the ingenious manufacturer to the crafty jobber, from the bold speculator to the timid annuitant, all are interested in these valuable pos-

sessions; even the calumniator himself spreads his libels there with profit.

“In whatever manner these colonies are governed or managed, they preserve always their original character of an undertaking founded by the mother country, which alone is to receive the benefits or suffer the losses. Even at the time when Government, unwisely, if you please, granted the advantage of the exclusive trade of these colonies to certain companies, it only yielded to particular persons the rights of all; but upon conditions which ought to have been beneficial to all. It was a mine which was farmed by the State, instead of being wrought by it. Perhaps, by this plan, the profits of the great company were diminished in favour of the small ones. I only mention this, to show that even in these monopolies the whole nation was interested in the produce of the colonies.

“The expense which these establishments have cost is certainly great; but how can we appreciate, by gold, or by numbers, the advantages which Europeans reap from their colonies? Is this not seen in the evident increase of population, the only certain sign of public prosperity; a sign which infallibly demonstrates, at once, abundance of materials, and necessity for more hands? (for men always increase where provisions abound, and where there is a call for labour). Is it not evident, that the necessity of selling the produce to the mother country, and purchasing all that is wanted from it, is a source of incalculable wealth? If the colonies were considered as provinces belonging to the Empire, or as allied States, this double monopoly must appear both oppressive and unjust, as the commerce would be the most disadvantageous, and the exchange the most unequal, that was ever proposed between two parts of the same empire, or between two different empires. In fact, the colonies are compelled to purchase all that they consume from us, which mo-

nopoly enables us to sell to them what they stand in need of at a very high price; and as they are likewise compelled to sell to us alone their produce, this enables us to procure, at a very moderate rate, not only what is wanted for the consumption of five-and-twenty millions of people, but likewise an immense overplus, which is sold, for our benefit, to those nations who have no colonies. Can all these advantages be calculated by a series of figures, which, only expressing quantities, can be applied only to inanimate objects, which are susceptible of addition and subtraction? The truths discovered by this means are more certain, in proportion as the subject is independent of others, abstracted, and considered only with relation to quantity. But when numbers are applied, to calculate, with exactness, national prosperity; when they are applied to government, and to whatever unites men in society; they produce the most absurd conclusions. This explains to us, besides, how the most exact sciences, when they venture out of the circle of subjects to which they are applicable, become, in the hands of the ambitious, the most treacherous guides, bewildering instead of illuminating the mind.

“I beg, gentlemen, that you will reflect, that the tendency of these errors is not simply to retard the wheel of national fortune, but to force it into retrograde movement. Such would be the natural effect of condemning to inactivity the millions of hands which are now employed in pushing it forward. How calamitous would be the consequence of cutting, at once, so many of the cords as are thus stretched in drawing riches to the nation.

“When the nature of the colonies is properly considered, the necessity becomes apparent of establishing there a different kind of government from that which is adapted either to the whole of France, or to any one of its departments; and this example ought not to be regarded as an exception from

the other. You see, now, what degree of wisdom was displayed by the Constituent Assembly, in leaving to your decision the admission or refusal of the representatives of the colonies, who should be considered as the representatives of a corporation or manufacture! Everything is explained by examining them in this light: but if they are looked upon only as one of the ordinary portions of the Empire, the immense sums which are gained by means of the monopoly must appear unjust and burdensome. The right of exacting this wealth is founded upon our having incurred the original expense, and upon the interest which is due for it. Thus, in spite of the monopoly, our colonists become richer in proportion to the quantity of their produce sold to us; and thus the gradual augmentation of their commerce increasing their need of our goods, their prosperity, and that of their mother country, go hand in hand.

“This reciprocity of exchange and of riches, so advantageous to France, makes it a duty incumbent upon us, at this moment, to repair the disaster which has befallen one of our richest establishments. The total loss sustained by St. Domingo is estimated at the sum of five or six hundred millions, the produce of which would have annually loaded one hundred and fifty ships of five hundred tons each. But this wound, however deep, will be healed by the fecundity of the soil, and by the industrious activity of the inhabitants, if proper assistance be granted them, under the title of loans; if commerce, enlightened as to her interests, which are likewise the general interests of the State, yields to the pressure of circumstances; if she gives time to her ruined creditors; if she wisely suspends her profits, in order to render them more certain and durable; and this is generously engaged to be done, in the numerous addresses which the merchants have pre-



sented to the King; and I have no fear in pledging myself for the exact performance of this engagement.

“The assistance best adapted to the circumstances of the colonies, and which will almost speedily relieve their wants, is giving up to them all that is owing to us by the United States of America. This mode of relief will at once accommodate the Americans and our planters. The first can, upon reasonable terms, furnish to the distressed planters those things which are most urgently wanted, such as wood, provisions, draught horses, domestic animals, and frames of houses, which, fashioned in the forests of North America, may be put together in an instant, and will replace, at a small expense, the stone buildings which have been burnt or destroyed.

“To what more useful purpose can those sums be destined, which a generous nation advanced to procure the independence of its allies, and which it feels already repaid with usury, by the pleasure of seeing their present independence? What sight can be more delightful to true philosophy, than to see the first wealth acquired by liberty, repairing the evils occasioned by licentiousness?

“It is of great moment, and his Majesty will readily consent, as it is agreeable to the Constitution, that it should be left entirely to the colony to regulate the distribution and partition of this grant to those who have suffered by fire and pillage; and likewise to levy a suitable contribution upon those whose possessions have been untouched.

“Measures for future security form the second and most important class of succours.

“The colonies, these sources of prosperity, were no sooner known to Europe, than every State attempted to procure for itself their exclusive possession. Every fortification placed there was planned by this jealous spirit: they were formed on the coasts, to oppose invasions from without. Why should



they fortify the interior of the colony against enemies whom they never expected? But melancholy experience convinces us that these are the most to be dreaded. This must necessarily occasion some change in the system of fortifications, which, besides, were insufficient, and require to be aided by more powerful means. These fortifications, ranged from distance to distance along the coast, terrifying only in appearance, as they are easily avoided by the enemy, may be supported by a number of small redoubts, placed in the interior, to prevent, in case of an insurrection, communication by the mountains. These posts, without being dangerous to liberty, will suppress licentiousness.

“The next consideration is, the establishment of colonial fusileers, better organized than the old militia of St. Domingo, composed entirely of proprietors; the whole of whom, according to the example of the national guards, should be ready to march at the first signal, and a part only should perform regular active service. Secondly, Police laws are wanted to be executed with prudence and firmness, comprehending men of all classes and colours. Thirdly, a complete code of laws, to excite confidence in all towards the colonial proprietors, who are born the administrators of these establishments; and at the same time to give the protection which is due to the men who cultivate the ground; preserve them from being treated with capricious, excessive, or useless rigour; and prevent or punish insurrections, as well as those abuses of authority which occasion them. Fourthly, new regulations are required relative to the slave trade, to prevent its various abuses; so that those sorrowful and unhappy victims of our political interests may not be rendered also the victims of the cruelty of individuals; and obliged to groan, not only under those evils which are become necessary to prevent greater, but likewise under the cruelties of sordid economy or avarice.

“Such are the measures which the King charges me to propose to you, and which you, with wisdom, will deliberate upon. Let us do homage to true philanthropy. It is only by its abuses, and by its false application, that the fatal effects, of which it is accused, can take place. It was owing to the moving solicitations and perseverance of some friends of humanity in England that two bills, relative to the slave trade, were carried in Parliament. These bills ameliorate the fate of the negroes, they limit the number which each slave ship is to contain, and command that which even a more enlightened avarice might have prompted. A people, whose natural sensibility is superior to such laws, will undoubtedly strive to surpass them, by instituting milder and more humane ones. If, in addition to the measures I have proposed, you likewise send a body of troops to guard the different fortified posts, perhaps you will find it useful never to leave the same corps longer than two or three years, on account of the climate, which a long residence renders fatal, and whose influence tends to relax military discipline. Perhaps, likewise, the danger of sending a great part of the army across the seas, every three years in succession, will induce you to adopt other measures which circumstances may suggest.

“With regard to external defences, the fortifications which are best adapted to the colonies are squadrons of ships constantly stationed there, and a number of vessels perpetually cruising. These are the citadels which ought to be employed, and they will have the good effect of training seamen and officers to man our fleets, and to make the national flag respected in every quarter of the globe.

“If, in the midst of such important interests, I am permitted, gentlemen, to mention my own zeal, I would renew the assurances I formerly gave, that none of the obstacles which are thrown in my way will diminish it. The busi-

ness of administration, perhaps the most important, certainly the most complicated, will undoubtedly fill up every moment of my time. Observe, gentlemen, that my office participates in the business of all the other branches of administration, besides having business peculiarly of its own. It comprehends men of all nations, of all colours, and with every kind of prejudice; military men of all descriptions; it requires the greatest responsibility; exacts upon every subject the most active and perpetual vigilance. Consider, then, if it be possible, that the man who is occupied with so immense a charge can hope to execute it, if he be diverted from such important concerns by perpetual accusations of so contemptible a nature, as to bring disgrace upon the useful measure of impeachment.

“But do not imagine, gentlemen, that I mean, by this, to turn your attention from that particular one which is pointed at me; I wish only to warn your wisdom against those general ones directed against all the King’s Ministers, and which we have the more reason to expect, because our determined exactitude in executing new laws, and in reforming abuses, will excite against us all the persons who lived by those abuses, and who must suffer by their reform. You will easily conceive that our present calumniators would become our greatest applauders, if less occupied with public than with private concerns, we were capable of sacrificing our principles, and did not esteem the approbation of our own consciences, and the good of the country, as the best recompense of upright Ministers.”

This conclusion being more adapted to the capacity of the audience in the galleries, than the important discussion which was the subject of my discourse, gained me great applause. This testimony of approbation was absolutely necessary for every Minister, while he spoke to the Assembly, not only to

procure him attention, but likewise to prevent him from being hissed and insulted when he went out. I did not, therefore, think it beneath me to take every method of insuring this sort of protection. I was particularly successful on Thursday the 19th of January, when I went, accompanied by all the Ministers, to refute the first report which the Marine Committee made against me, in which I was accused of an intention to subvert the Constitution. The sentence which I pronounced in answer to this accusation was more particularly attended to than the other parts of my speech, and was generally applauded in the galleries.

“I am accused,” said I, “of being an enemy of the Constitution. I openly declare that my firm opinion is, that the safety of France depends on its being adhered to. And I must add, that it is not those who express the greatest enthusiasm for the Constitution who observe it most rigidly. It is only by our actions that we can prove our fidelity; and I defy my accusers to point out a single act of my administration which is not conformable to this Constitution.”

Such was really my opinion at that period, and such was the constant principle of my conduct during my Ministry. And I still believe, that if this opinion had been more general, the Revolution would have had no other consequences than the reformation of all those abuses which were its first object.

CHAPTER XV.

Singular conversation with Linguet.—His proposal of sending M. Duchilleau to St. Domingo.—Conditions proposed by Madame Duchilleau.—Linguet's denunciation against me in the Assembly.—Sensibility of the King.—Proof of his fidelity to the Constitution.—M. de Gerville.—Characteristic traits respecting the King.

THE applause which my discourse on the disasters of St. Domingo obtained in the Assembly did not prevent its displeasing the partisans of the liberty of the blacks, particularly Brissot and Condorcet, whose opinions, without naming the men, I had refuted in such a manner as to make their absurdity evident to the majority of the Assembly. This was a slight revenge for the sarcasms which daily appeared against me in both their Journals: but I irritated my accusers still more, by the observation which terminated my discourse, which was an attack so direct, as to fix all eyes upon them.

The day after I had pronounced that discourse, which had in some degree re-established my credit, a person, who would not tell his name, demanded a short audience of me, "to communicate things of the utmost importance." As my present situation exacted of me to be upon my guard against such visits, I did not choose to receive him in my closet, and I went into my saloon, that I might be nearer the antechamber where my domestics were. I found a little man, ill dressed, and of no very agreeable countenance. Advancing towards him, "Is it you, sir," said I, "who had things of importance to communicate to me?"

"Yes, sir, it is me."

"Well, upon what subject?" said I.

“To render you the greatest possible service,” returned he; “for you will surely consider as such my indicating to you the only means of re-establishing good order and peace in St. Domingo?”

“Yes, certainly,” said I.

“Well, sir, I bring you these means,” returned he.

“If they are as certain as you say —”

“*If* they are as certain!” continued he. “Do you think that if they were not, I would have quitted my country residence to come and lose my time here, in conversation with you, and make you lose yours also? Yes, sir, the means I have to propose are certain, and very certain. I do not pretend to inform you, sir,” continued he, “that it is to the weakness of M. Blanchelande<sup>1</sup> that all the evil is to be attributed. You would not, perhaps, acknowledge this, because you are a Minister, consequently may think yourself entitled to dissemble, and to hold a language contrary to your real sentiments: but it is sufficient for me that I know what must be your opinion of M. Blanchelande. I am convinced, that if you could at this moment lay your hands upon a man of a superior character,” added he, with exultation, “one already known at St. Domingo, for his energy, his firmness, and his justice, generally esteemed, respected, and feared by the blacks, the whites, and men of all colours, capable of

<sup>1</sup> P. F. Rouxel de Blanchelande, a Military Officer, was Governor of Hayti in 1789. In the extraordinary triangular duel which followed the outbreak of the Revolution, between the white planters (the aristocracy of the island) the mulattoes and free men of colour, and the slaves, Blanchelande took the side of his own race. On the 4th April 1792 three Commissioners, the principal being Sauthonax, were sent to Hayti. Their first act was to arrest Blanchelande and send him to France, where he was delivered into the hands of the Revolutionary Tribunal and guillotined on the 11th April 1793. His son followed him to the scaffold on the 20th July 1794.

overawing by his presence alone; if you knew of such a man, I repeat it, would you not be happy to be enabled to send him immediately to that island? Well, sir, it is this very man whom I come to offer you. I do not mean myself, but my second self, M. Duchilleau, my intimate friend. He is at this moment about a hundred leagues from Paris, and certainly has no idea that I am speaking to you of him. I have not yet written to him upon the subject. Your discourse in the Assembly yesterday suggested the idea. I am even not very certain that he would accept the situation, unless I use all my influence to determine him, and also promise to accompany him."

My astonishment prevented my interrupting the man's volubility. At last, having a little recovered myself, I asked him, "Pray, sir, in what quality do you propose to accompany M. Duchilleau? As his aid-de-camp?"

"His aid-de-camp!" replied he. "You may see, sir, that I am neither of an age, nor have I the appearance, surely, of an aid-de-camp. Besides, it is not my line. But here is the point: Duchilleau, who is perhaps the best governor for the colonies that we have had for a long time, perfectly understands all which concerns the military department: but he understands nothing of the civil administration; and it is that which I shall take upon myself."

"Very well," said I, smiling; "but it is necessary that I should know your name."

"For what purpose? Is not my proposal good enough for my name to be dispensed with?"

"I do not say the contrary," resumed I: "but do you think I can propose to the King to send an anonymous person to the intendance of St. Domingo?"

"Well, sir, my name is Linguet."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Simon Nicolay Henri Linguet was an advocate and author of



“O, M. Linguet, I am very happy to see you.”

“But my proposal,” resumed he, “what think you of it? You seem to laugh.”

“That does not prevent me,” answered I, “from giving it just weight. I promise you to lay it before the King, who knows M. Duchilleau a great deal better than I do.”

“But if you laugh,” said he, “when you mention it to the King, he will laugh also; and *your* affair will fail. I call it *your* affair, and not M. Duchilleau’s and mine, for on our part it is a sacrifice.”

I wished him good morning, and assured him that I would speak to the King with all the seriousness that the case required.

I received the same day a note from Madame Duchilleau, requesting a rendezvous for next day, which I gave her. I supposed that Linguet had given her an account of our conversation, and that what she had to say was in consequence of it. She was very exact in coming at the hour I had appointed. She told me she was informed of her husband’s having been thought of for the Government of St. Domingo; and as he was not then in Paris, she came, in his name, to talk with me upon the subject, knowing perfectly well the only conditions on which he would accept that situation. I answered, “that I did not know of M. Duchilleau’s having been thought of for the Government of St. Domingo; that it

sufficient note in his day to draw from Voltaire the opinion that “M. Linguet is an advocate of much wit and an author of several books in which philosophic views and paradoxes are to be found in plenty.” For a year or two, 1774–1776, he edited the “*Journal politique et litteraire*.”

Although a free lance, who had spent his year in the Bastille and had repaid Joseph II. for pensioning and protecting him, by a violent attack on his Government, this curious adventurer has the ill-fortune to be guillotined on the 27 June 1794, on the charge of “flattering the despots of Vienna and London.”

was true Linguet had mentioned it to me the preceding morning, but the King had never said a word upon the subject. However (I added), as his Majesty may possibly have an eye to M. Duchilleau, she might, if she pleased, inform me of the conditions upon which he would accept it." She then drew out of her pocket a memorandum of four pages, which she read, and left with me. The principal conditions were, First, The payment of debts contracted by M. Duchilleau, in consequence of the losses he had sustained by being suddenly dismissed from that Government. These were estimated at 300,000 livres. Secondly, The expense of his voyage and establishment, 200,000. Thirdly, Annual salary as governor, 300,000. Fourthly, The *cordons rouges*. Fifthly, The power of changing and replacing all civil and military officers. Sixthly, *Carte blanche* with regard to his manner of conducting his administration, &c. &c.

However valuable the services of M. Duchilleau might be, the new regulations did not permit their being purchased at the high price that his wife set upon them; and she assured me that she positively would not make the least abatement in her demands. Therefore the account I gave of these conditions to the Council served only to show the high opinion she entertained of her husband's merit, against which I am far from raising any doubt. I was not acquainted with M. Duchilleau; was but imperfectly informed of the situation in which the island was, when he was at St. Domingo; and I was entirely ignorant of the motives of his recall.

Linguet was enraged at the bad success of his proposals, and endeavoured to avenge himself, by taking upon him to bring forward a most indecent and ridiculous accusation against me in the Assembly. Two of the keepers of the magazines at Trincomale in the East Indies, having been con-

victed of embezzlement to the value of more than a million of livres, were ordered to be arrested, and sent for trial to France. The documents relating to this affair had been transmitted to the Minister of the Marine; and there was a paper amongst them, written and signed by both of the accusers, in which they confessed that they were guilty of embezzlement to a certain extent, but that the value of the effects which they had embezzled did not amount to more than 300,000 livres. These two men, whose names were Labadie and Gallet, on their arrival in France, had been lodged in the prison at Brest, at the beginning of the Revolution; and the more important affairs with which the Ministers were at that time occupied had, very fortunately for the criminals, prevented the prosecution of their trial. As they were convinced that they could not escape a capital condemnation, they took care not to complain of the slowness of the proceedings. Upon the suppression of the ancient courts of justice, and the establishment of new judges, this affair was carried before the tribunal of the district of Quimper. By means of money and intrigue the prisoners contrived to bring on their trials in 1791, without the knowledge of Government; consequently the papers which were in my office, relative to this affair, were not produced against them; and the court, finding no proof of their guilt, entirely acquitted them.

The prisoners being thus set at liberty, kept themselves very quiet, and never sought to take advantage of their acquittal until the Assembly took under their protection about twenty seditious fellows, whom M. de Fresné, Governor of Pondicherry, had sent back to France. A decree was pronounced in justification of those twenty persons, attributing their conduct to the zeal of patriotism; and an order was given that they might be transmitted back to the Indies at the public expense.

The keepers of the magazine at Trincomale imagined that this decree might possibly include them, and came to me, representing themselves as victims of despotism; and not only demanded to participate in the benefits of the decree, but also claimed the sum of 150,000 livres, as an indemnification for their long and unjust detention. The first time they came to my levee, to present their memorial, I was ignorant of the business: but I told them, "that I could not take upon me to comprehend them in the decree, as the persons in whose favour it was issued were particularly named; and there were no such names as Labadie or Gallet in the list. That with respect to the indemnification they claimed, I would examine their right to it, and do them justice."

They returned in about a week after; and though they had been informed, in my office, that the papers containing the proofs against them were under my examination, they had the effrontery still to claim an indemnification.

"Are you in your senses?" said I, with indignation, and loud enough to be heard by all the people who had come to my levee.

"Yes, sir," said they, rather embarrassed by my question.

"And do you imagine," resumed I, "that I am so little in possession of mine, as to grant fifty thousand crowns of indemnification to people who have only been done injustice to in not having been hanged according to their deserts?"

"How, sir! Were we not acquitted?"

"You were so," replied I, "but only because the papers of which I am in possession, containing the proofs against you, were not produced. But here they are; and you may depend upon it I shall order the matter to be revised, and we shall then see what is due to you for having stolen from the Government, according to your own confession, to the amount of 300,000 livres."

This speech rather confounded them. They retired, threatening to complain to the Assembly of my ministerial despotism, of my harshness, &c. The first step they took was to consult Linguet, who, with the utmost alacrity, undertook their defence. He prepared a long discourse, in the form of a petition, which was announced to the Assembly as a capital accusation against me. This was sufficient to obtain him permission to speak as soon as he presented himself at the bar, and to gain him the support of all my enemies in the Assembly.

Having fixed, with Linguet, on the day on which he was to bring his accusation, they advised him not to appear until the evening meeting, because it was generally less punctually attended than those of the morning; and it would therefore be easier to bring a majority. According to this arrangement, Linguet appeared in the Assembly at the evening sitting, and took his place at the bar betwixt his two clients. Having obtained permission to speak, he began his discourse with a very long and circumstantial account of our first settlements in the Indies. He enlarged, with great emphasis and gesticulation, upon the vices of their administration, upon the incapacity and despotism of the agents of the Government, &c. The Assembly showed symptoms of impatience at an harangue so little to the point. Linguet continued, without mercy. At last, they were so worn out, that they uttered deep groans; some yawned aloud; one called out, "Go back to the flood!" others, "To the point; for heaven's sake, to the point." Linguet, irritated at this insult, only answered by looks of indignation, which he darted on all sides against the exclaimers. The President's bell at last re-established silence, and Linguet again took up the thread of his discourse; but at so early a period of our settlement, that the patience of the members being exhausted, the cry

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“Go back to the flood!” was renewed with such vehemence, that the President thought proper to request of M. Linguet to adhere to the matter contained in his petition.

“I know better than any one,” answered M. Linguet, with a very stately air, “upon what the interest of my clients exacts that I should speak, and on what I ought to be silent. You shall hear all or nothing.”

“Nothing, nothing, nothing,” was echoed from all sides. It was evident that the nothings had it. The President granted to the petitioners the honours of the sitting, and told them to leave their petition at the bar.

“No, M. le President,” answered Linguet, in rage; “I shall carry off my discourse, since the Assembly will not listen to it; and as for the honours of the sitting, I thank you, but I have something else to do.”

Saying this, he retreated in a fury, tearing his papers to pieces, to the great mirth of the audience.

When I came to the Council, I was informed of every circumstance of this scene, which I related to the King, who was the more pleased with the ludicrous catastrophe, because he had been apprehensive of some troublesome consequence to me from this manœuvre.

In this same Council we were witnesses to a scene of a very different nature, much too interesting to be passed over in silence. M. Cahier de Gerville read aloud the sketch or rough draft of a proclamation he proposed, relative to the assassination, pillaging, and other acts of violence, at that time very frequent; particularly against the nobility, on the pretext of aristocracy, &c. In the proposed proclamation was the following sentence, “*Those disorders interrupt the happiness we at present enjoy.*” He had no sooner pronounced it than the King said, “That sentence must be altered.”

M. de Gerville having read the expression again, replied, "I perceive nothing that requires to be altered, Sire."

"Do not make me speak of my happiness," resumed his Majesty, with emotion. "I cannot authorize such a falsehood. How can I be happy, M. de Gerville, at a time when nobody is happy in France? No, sir, the French are *not* happy: I see it but too well. They will be so, I hope; and I wish it very ardently. When that time arrives, I also shall be happy, and shall then be able, with truth, to declare it."

These words, which the King uttered with a faltering voice, made a lively impression upon us, and was followed by a general silence, which prevailed some minutes. His Majesty being apprehensive that those marks of sensibility, which he had not been able to repress, would raise a suspicion against his attachment to the Constitution, seized an opportunity, which M. de Gerville afforded him a few minutes after, of showing that he was determined to adhere very scrupulously to his engagements in support of it; for in an affair reported by M. de Gerville, he pronounced an opinion more strictly conformable to the letter of the Constitution than that of the Minister himself. The particulars of this I need not give at present, as they must appear hereafter, in the account of my administration which I laid before the Assembly upon my dismissal.

As M. de Gerville was more enthusiastically fond of the Constitution than any one of the Council, he was confounded and rather abashed to find that the King was inclined to adhere to it more scrupulously than himself.

It was a remarkable feature in the King's character, which particularly showed the turn of his mind, that his natural timidity, and the difficulty he found in expressing his ideas, never appeared when religion, the relief of the people, or the



happiness of France, were in question. Upon these occasions he always delivered himself with an energy and facility which never failed to astonish the new Ministers, who were prepossessed with the prevailing opinion of the King's narrow capacity. I do not pretend to assert that Louis XVI. was a great genius; but of this I am certain, that his natural capacity was very far above mediocrity; and that had it been cultivated by an education better calculated to fit him for his future rank in life, he would have ranked among the best and ablest of our Kings. We had daily opportunities of seeing him give what has been generally considered as proofs of an active and comprehensive mind. While he was reading letters, or memorials, or newspapers, he could, at the same time, attend to the discussions of the Council with such distinctness and discrimination as enabled him to understand the whole; as afterwards appeared, by the account he gave of what he read and had heard. A striking instance of this occurred one day, on which he had read several memorials, and letters, and journals, while the Ministers were making reports on the affairs of their departments, and particularly while M. Cahier de Gerville made one, on a question of some delicacy, after which the decision was postponed for eight days: but when that Minister, in making his second report, happened to omit an essential circumstance which had been in the first, the King directly put him in mind of it, to the astonishment of us all, who had believed that he had been too much occupied with the memorials and letters, because he had, at the time, made pertinent observations on them. What is certain is, that none of us could contend with the King in point of memory; and his judgment was no less excellent.

This I can affirm with truth, that during all the time that

I was in administration, every paper of importance, of whatever kind, that was submitted to the King's examination, after it had been discussed in the Council, was improved by the alterations his Majesty suggested.

## LOUIS THE SIXTEENTH.

### CHAPTER XVI.

Measures taken by the Ministers to gain over the principal Journalists of Paris.—M. de Narbonne takes upon him to treat with Brissot and Condorcet.—Consequences of this negotiation.—Atrocious imputations against the King by Brissot, in the paper of the 29th of January.—I denounce this paper in the Council, and propose that the author should be prosecuted.—The other Ministers think it is better to despise this insult.—I write to the King upon this subject.—Appearance of rupture with Algiers.—Rapid success of the measures employed upon this occasion.—Remarkable offer of the Dey to the King.—Secret message of Tippoo Sahib.—His presents.—A conversation with the Queen.

THE great influence which the Journals had on the public opinion made the Ministers think it of importance to insure their silence, if they could not acquire their praise. This question was thoroughly discussed in a committee of Ministers, which was held at M. Cahier de Gerville's. M. de Narbonne took it upon him to negotiate with Brissot, author of the paper intitled *Le Patriote Français*, and with Condorcet,<sup>1</sup> author of *La Chronique de Paris*. The result of

<sup>1</sup> Marie Jean-Antoine Caritat, Marquis de Condorcet, was a member of an old and distinguished family of Dauphine. Before the Revolution he held a high rank in the literary world of Paris, which he owed both to his undoubted ability and to his especially undoubted rank. He issued an excellent edition of the works of Voltaire, annotated Pascal, wrote several works on scientific subjects and on political and social questions such as negro slavery and the Rights of Man. He also edited a Journal entitled the "Chronique de Paris," which was too refined, decorous and artistic to compete with the coarse and brutal newspapers of Brissot, Cara, or Hebert and had consequently but a small circulation, even in Paris.

Condorcet was not a member of the Constituent Assembly; he entered public life for the first time when he was elected as one of the Deputies of Paris to the Legislative Assembly, Oct. 1792.

this negotiation was, that the two Journalists praised M. de Narbonne, and attacked M. de Lessart and me with more virulence than ever. We remarked this to M. de Narbonne, who answered that he had expressed his displeasure at their conduct, and that they daily gave him the most positive assurances that they would change their style; and he promised to speak to them again. He did so, without doubt, but with so little effect, that Brissot, not contented with attacking the Ministers in whom the King placed the greatest confidence, even pushed his audacity the length of publishing the most atrocious calumnies against his Majesty, in his paper of the 28th of January. I denounced this paper in the Council, as an attempt of a criminal nature, which deserved exemplary punishment: but the Ministers, who had been longer in office, and the King himself, accustomed to despise pamphlets, put less importance upon it. They did not reflect, that although in times of tranquillity, and under a well-regulated Government, the insolence of a journalist may be safely despised, yet in the present situation of France, such an incendiary publication kept up the ferment that al-

In that Assembly there were few men of rank or distinction and Condorcet, accordingly, became famous as a convert from the Noblesse to the cause of republicanism. Reëlected to the Convention, he sat and voted with the Girondist party.

On the question of the sentence on the King he gave the following judgment, "Any difference in the punishment of the same crime is an attack upon Equality. The punishment of conspirators is death, but this punishment is contrary to our principles and I can never vote for it. I give my vote for the most severe punishment next to that of death in the Penal Code." The punishment for which Condorcet voted was the Gallies. It need not be said that such a sentence was far more cruel and cold-blooded than any form of death. The probability, and the only possible condonation, is that, like others of his party who voted for the appeal to the people, Condorcet desired to delay the King's execution, feeling convinced that if once delayed it would never be carried out. A cowardly policy which speedily recoiled on the heads of the Girondists. Condorcet escaped

ready existed in the minds of the populace, and tended to excite them to insurrection, pillage, and murder; and the mode so long adopted, of despising the insults of the journalists, only rendered them more dangerous; and so multiplied them, that their punishment became impossible. I added, that with regard to his Majesty, if he persevered in thinking it beneath his dignity to take any notice of such calumnies, I had nothing more to say: but as for myself, although I was willing, while the journalists confined themselves to general abuse, to overlook and despise it, yet when particular and specific facts were mentioned, if my rank as Minister prevented me from the right of disproving them, I should desire leave of the King to resign my situation, and submit the case to a court of justice, that the falsehood of the accusations might be made manifest. The Ministers admitted the force of this reasoning with respect to me, but said it could not be applied to attacks made on the King, because the Constitution was completely silent as to any method of proceeding against journalists who should venture to publish calumnies against him.

the proscription of the 31st May and 2nd June 1793, but after a violent denunciation by Chabot, a Decree of Accusation was passed against him on the 8th July 1793.

He contrived to conceal himself in the house of a friend, where he wrote his last work, "A sketch of the Progress of the Human Mind," in which he advocated the cult of the Perfectability of Man as a substitute for the worn-out religion of Christianity. Human Perfectability seems a strange triumph of theory over the experience of one who had endured nine months of the Convention and was now a proscribed refugee. In consequence of a Decree of the Convention sentencing to death all who harboured accused or suspected persons, Condorcet kept his retreat and after some wanderings was arrested and imprisoned at Bourg Royal (known at the time as Bourg-de-l'Egalite).

In this prison he committed suicide by taking a poison which he had long carried concealed on his person, 27th March 1794. He was buried under the name he had given on his arrest, Pierre Simeon, and it was not until some months later that his identity was established.

“No express law,” answered I, “existed in ancient Rome against the crime of parricide, because it had not entered into the mind of the Legislature that such a crime would be committed, but assuredly it was never meant by the Romans, that a son who murdered his father should pass unpunished. In my opinion, the silence of the Constitution on the crime of calumniating the King, cannot be thought more favourable to Brissot.”

Nevertheless, upon account of the delicate circumstances in which the King was placed, it was thought prudent to deliberate upon the most proper manner of managing this affair, and therefore the Ministers agreed to take it into consideration at a future meeting.

The King was endowed with a very just judgment, but unhappily of so timid a disposition, and so distrustful of himself, that he was apt to prefer the opinions of weaker people to his own, and always adopted that of the majority of his Council: but as I had more confidence in the King’s judgment than in that of my colleagues, I never proposed any thing of importance, either in a committee of the Ministers, or in Council, without having first submitted it to his Majesty’s examination. This I did upon the present occasion, as appears from the subsequent letter, which I wrote the following day to his Majesty.

“January 31, 1792.

“I have the honour to submit to your Majesty the contents of a letter to the National Assembly, respecting the execrable paper the *Patriote*,<sup>2</sup> which appeared on Sunday.

“After mature consideration on the most proper steps to

<sup>2</sup>The article in Brissot’s “*Patriote*,” Sunday, 29th Jan. 1792, to which Bertrand alludes, is a long and purely imaginary account of the proceedings of the “Austrian Committee” at the Tuileries. Louis XVI. is attacked only by implication. The Ministers and ex-Ministers are warned, in the usual form, that the time is at hand

be taken, I am of opinion, that a denunciation made to the Public Prosecutor by the Ministers, either as agents of the executive power, or as citizens, might equally be considered as irregular, because the manner of proceeding is not clearly indicated in the Constitution: but it evidently lays the King under the obligation of employing the power delegated to him for the maintenance of the Constitution, and in support of the laws. This obligation comprehends that of making the constituted powers respected, and of requiring the execution of the seventeenth article of the fifth chapter of the Constitution. This article necessarily applies to the offense committed by the author and printer of the paper entitled *Le Patriote Français*; the King then may order the Public Prosecutor to give them up to justice. It may even be maintained, with reason, that his Majesty's oath to the Constitution imports that very obligation; and as the motives which determine such a step are of considerable importance, it would be proper for the King to inform the Assembly, by a letter expressed in such a manner as would make a favourable impression. I presume that the letter, a copy of which I have the honour to transmit to your Majesty, will answer the purpose. Your Majesty will please to let me know whether it has your approbation: if it has, I shall lay it this evening before the Committee."

when they shall receive their just reompense from the infuriated People.

The most curious passage in the article is the following: "The same Committee is sending to London an American intriguer who calls himself the Governor, Morris" (Brissot had not mastered Gouverneur Morris's Christian name) "who, considering that he is a citizen of a free country, has played the sorriest and most infamous role during the Revolution.

"He has been throughout the confidant or indeed the very backbone of the enemies of our liberty." There is just as much, or just as little truth in this strange attack on Gouverneur Morris as in the rest of this, or any number, of Brissot's influential Journal.



His Majesty sent me the following answer:

“Your advice seems to me good; and the letter also, excepting some words, which must be changed. But as this affair, which appears to me of a delicate nature, is not in your Department, and as the order and the letter which you propose must be countersigned by the Minister of Justice, I shall wait the determination of the committee.”

In this committee the Ministers agreed that the form which I proposed was not contrary to the Constitution; but they thought that so strong a measure would be the means of informing France, and all Europe, of a fact now known only to Brissot's subscribers, and would give a kind of celebrity to that journalist. This was possible; but it was much more certain, that entirely overlooking his conduct would render him more audacious, and encourage others to imitate his example. This happened accordingly; for from that period the King was insulted in the most revolting manner, by innumerable pamphlets, of which the people became the echo, and, by degrees, were emboldened to that degree, that crowds assembled under the windows of the Tuileries almost every evening, and poured forth the grossest abuse against the King and royal family.

At this period France was menaced with a rupture with the Regency of Algiers. All the French who happened to be there were conveyed back to Marseilles; and by the same transport, an order was sent to the Algerines to quit France immediately. The French consul at Algiers was confined to his house by the Dey's orders, and expected every moment to be conducted to the galleys. The motive of this rupture was the pretended negligence of France, in fulfilling a promise which had been made to the Dey, of lending him a frigate for the purpose of transporting his ambassador to Constantinople. Some agents of the Court of Spain had excited this storm

at Algiers. They persuaded the Dey that the French Revolution having annihilated the King's authority, it was no longer in his power to fulfil his engagements; that the Assembly, which reigned in his place, respected none; that the Regency would have no such proceedings to apprehend on the part of the Court of Spain; and in order to convince the Dey, he was offered, in the name of his Catholic Majesty, a very fine Spanish frigate and a corvette, which had just then arrived at Algiers, with which he might, if he pleased, convey his ambassador to Constantinople; and in the meantime they begged that he would accept of a corvette as a present. These offers, which the Dey readily accepted, determined him to break openly with France, imagining that he could brave its resentment with impunity.

I was informed of these circumstances by a courier-extraordinary, sent by the African Company of Marseilles, who were greatly alarmed. I gave an account of them to the Assembly, as also the amicable means adopted by the King to obtain satisfaction, and the vigorous measures preparing, in case it was refused.

The frigate promised to the Dey had been long ready in the port of Toulon, and its departure was only retarded in consequence of his own request that the command should be given to Captain Doumergue, a man originally from France, but who had been long settled in Algiers, and was strongly protected by the Dey, who had an interest in most of his commercial schemes. That he might turn such an opportunity to greatest profit, Doumergue had come to France to provide an advantageous cargo; and the time necessary for this was the sole cause of the frigate's being so long detained. But it was now sent off with the utmost dispatch, under the command of an intelligent officer, who had instructions to explain the whole affair to the Dey, and to require satisfac-

tion for the insult which the French consul had received. Captain Doumergue was sent with him, as an incontestible witness of the truth of these facts. The winds being favourable, the voyage was short: but on their arrival before Algiers, the frigate was refused entrance into the harbour, by the express command of the Regency. Captain Doumergue was then sent ashore in a boat. He waited upon the Dey, had the order revoked, and in less than two hours the frigate sailed into the harbour. The officer who commanded it soon obtained an audience of the Dey, who was perfectly satisfied with the explanation he received, and acknowledged he had been deceived, but threw the whole blame upon the French consul, who had allowed him to remain in error; and he demanded that he should be recalled. On the following day the commander of the frigate was admitted to a second audience, and was received with distinguished respect. The Dey made him sit down by him, contrary to the usual custom, and talked of the affairs of France, particularly of the situation of the King, with the most lively interest. He told him that he had given orders for six Arabian horses to be conveyed on board his ship, as a present for his Majesty; and that it was his intention to adhere to the treaty betwixt France and Algiers; and in order to do honour to this mission, he consented that the trade of France should this year draw from Algiers three vessels of grain over and above the number fixed by the last treaty. Next day the commander of the frigate took his leave, and the Dey gave him a letter for the King. This officer set sail for Toulon, where he arrived in as short time, as he had taken in the crossing betwixt Toulon and Algiers, so that his mission was fulfilled in less than eight days: and I had the satisfaction of announcing to the Assembly the issue, three weeks after I had announced the rupture with Algiers.

The rapidity and success of this negotiation excited so great a surprise, that my enemies affected to believe the whole affair to be a romance, fabricated for the purpose of diverting their attention from the denunciation against me. And this opinion would probably have prevailed, if the Arabian horses had not arrived, and if the deputies of the Department of the *Bouches du Rhone* had not been informed of the truth by their correspondents.

In the Dey's letter to his Majesty, among many expressions of friendship and good will, he offered to assist the King to reduce his rebellious subjects, in order to restore him to the possession of his just authority. It will easily be believed, that in the translation of this letter, which I laid before the Assembly, I took care to suppress this sentence, which I should have been suspected of having suggested; and it would certainly have been cited in the Journals as a proof of the existence of a horrible plot against the liberty of the nation.

During the negotiation with Algiers, a secret message was sent to the King from Tippoo Sahib,<sup>3</sup> who demanded of the King 6000 French troops, offering to pay their transportation, clothing and maintenance. He was convinced, that with this assistance he could destroy the English army and

<sup>3</sup> Tippoo Sahib, Sultan of Mysore, was a determined and dangerous enemy of British rule in Southern India. In 1789, he laid waste the Carnatic almost to the gates of Madras, but after two years' hard fighting he was compelled to resign a large portion of his dominions, to pay a heavy indemnity and to surrender his two sons to the British as hostages. It was during, or immediately after, this war that he entered into the negotiations mentioned here. Tippoo continued his overtures to the Convention and Directory.

When Bonaparte invaded Egypt in 1798 he made tempting offers to him which were interrupted by the British Government. War was again declared against him in March 1799 and after he had been beaten in the field, his capital, Seringapatam, was besieged.

On the 4th May, the fort was successfully stormed and Tippoo slain while fighting in the breach.

settlements in India, and ensure the possession to France. That nothing might transpire of this affair, Tippoo had not mentioned it in his council, and had secretly negotiated the business with M. de Fresne, governor of Pondicherry, through the means of M. Leger, *administrateur civil* of France in India, who understood the Persian language, and who wrote the dispatches dictated by Tippoo relative to this embassy. M. Leger himself came from India to France with this message; and in order to conceal the real object of his voyage, some time before he set out he had declared that his private affairs would oblige him to return immediately to France.

As M. Leger was directed to the minister of marine, I informed the King of Tippoo Sahib's proposal; but notwithstanding its advantages, and although the insurrection of the negroes of St. Domingo rendered it necessary to send a considerable force there, under the pretence of which it would have been easy to have sent to the East Indies the 6000 men demanded by Tippoo, without raising the suspicion of the English government; the natural probity of the King's mind would not permit him to adopt this measure. "This resembles," said he, "the affair of America, which I never think of without regret. My youth was taken advantage of at that time, and we suffer for it now. The lesson is too severe to be forgotten."

The message of Tippoo Sahib was accompanied with presents for the King and Queen. Those destined for the King consisted of an assortment of gold gauze, crimson silk stuffs flowered with gold, painted linen for three Persian dresses, twelve pieces of white linen of the finest quality, an aigrette of bad diamonds, flat and yellow and ill set, with a clasp ornamented in the same taste. The presents for the Queen were still less valuable, consisting merely of three bottles half full of Indian essences, of a very inferior quality, and

a box of perfumed powder balls and scented matches. When I presented the stuffs and diamonds to the King, he said to me, laughing, "What can I do with all this trumpery? It seems only proper to dress up dolls. But *you* have little girls; they may be pleased with them. Give the whole to them."

"But the diamonds, Sire," said I.

"O, they are mighty fine, to be sure," added he, smiling. "Perhaps you would have them placed among the jewels of the Crown. Pray take them also, and wear them in your hat, if you please."

The Queen would receive only one bottle of the essence of roses. She made me a present of the rest, saying, that she valued nothing which came from India, except the beautiful linen. I then begged she would permit me to present her with that which the King gave me the preceding day.

"Willingly," said the Queen: "but I won't take it all. How many pieces are there?"

"Twelve, Madame," answered I.

"Well," said she, "bring me, at first, two pieces, and I will see whether they suit me. Besides, you will by this means have an apparent motive of seeing me oftener, without raising suspicion that you come to the pretended Austrian Committee."

She then expressed how much the King had been hurt by that atrocious calumny, which they daily endeavoured to confirm in the public papers by the most absurd falsehoods.

During the conversation, the little Dauphin,<sup>4</sup> beautiful as

<sup>4</sup>Louis Charles, Dauphin of France, afterwards titular King, Louis XVII., was born at Versailles on the 27th March 1785. The story of his short life is so sordid and pitiful that it is best told in the fewest possible words. When the Dauphin entered the Temple from which he was never again to emerge, 13 August 1792, he was in his eighth year. On the death of Louis XVI. he was proclaimed by his uncle, afterwards Louis XVIII. and by the Chiefs of the Army as La Vendie, under the title of Louis XVII.



an angel, was singing and skipping about the Queen's apartment, with a small wooden sabre and shield in his hand, which had been given him that day. They came to take him away to supper, and in two bounds he was at the door.

"How now, my son!" said the Queen; "you are going without making a bow to M. Bertrand."

He naturally became an object of deep interest to the many French royalists, both at home and abroad, and one plot after another for his release was discovered. The Committee of Public Safety, alarmed and naturally disposed towards brutality, ordered the boy to be separated from his mother, aunt and sister and to be placed in the hands of a "Tutor." This was carried out with every additional brutality which the Commission of the Municipality could think, on the 31st July 1793. The "tutor" recommended by Marat and appointed by the Municipality, from their own General Council, was a cobbler named Antoine Simon, Member of the Insurrectionary Municipality 10th August 1792 and of the Cordelier Club, who was to receive 500 francs per month, but was ordered under no circumstances to leave the Temple by day or night. Simon was a drunken, illiterate brute and his wife was little better.

They beat and abused him, made him drunk, and taught him as much blasphemy and obscenity as they were themselves possessed of.

Of the horrible charges against his mother, aunt, and sister which they forced him to sign it is best to say nothing. The whole proceeding was thoroughly characteristic of Chaumette and Hebert. On the 19th January 1794 the Simons, man and wife, left the Temple. Simon himself was guillotined with Robespierre, Saint Just, Couthon and others on the 28th July 1794. His wife became a chronic invalid and died in a hospital for incurables in 1819.

The Committee of Public Safety declined to appoint a second "tutor," and the Municipality, left to their own devices, locked the child up in a small room, closed and padlocked with a grille through which food and occasional clean linen could be passed. Here he remained absolutely alone and in silence, except for the daily "Inspection" by the Commissioners and Guard of the Municipality, who usually came about midnight with brutal gibes and harsh orders to the brat to show himself.

This state of things lasted for more than six months and was ended, with so many other horrors, by the fall of Robespierre. The child was then visited and found in a state of indescribable misery by Barras and other members of the Convention. Some efforts



“O, mamma,” said he smiling, and continuing to jump, “is not M. Bertrand one of our friends? Good night, M. Bertrand!” So saying, he bounded out of the room.

“Is he not very pretty?” said the Queen, when he was gone. “He is happy also in being so young; for,” added she, with a sigh, “he does not feel our sorrows, and his gaiety does us good.”

were made to alleviate his condition but it was too late. He sank rapidly and died of incurable scrofula on the 8th June 1795.

Immediately after his death, the rumours as to his identity, which are still in full circulation, began.

The question, which remains still unanswered, was and is, whether the child who died in the Temple was Louis XVII. or whether he was a substitute for the real Louis who had been rescued at an earlier period. The grounds on which these rumours are based are — first; the fact that Simon's widow while in a hospital for Incurables repeatedly declared that when she and her husband left the Temple, they were handsomely paid to carry off Louis, and to substitute for him a deaf and dumb child who was immediately walled up as described above. Secondly; the fact that the physician who attended the child on his death bed never having seen the Dauphin, could not really identify him. They were told that the child was “Louis Capet” and they worded their certificate of death accordingly. Thirdly; certain acts and expressions of Louis' uncles and still more so of his sister, the Duchess d'Angouleme, which seemed or even held to imply an abuse of affection for, or interest in, the child of the Temple. Humour, credulity and the cult of the mysterious vary little from age to age. Just as the death of our own Edward V. and his brother in the Tower, produced such impostors as Perkin Lambeck and Lambeth Simnel, so did the death of this unhappy child, with the slight tinge of suspicion which clung to it, produce a whole generation of such pretenders as the Naundorffs, the Richmonts and the Eleazer Williams. There are said to have been in all, forty of these impostors, all of whom no doubt found a sufficient supply of believers to provide them with food, drink and clothes, on easy terms.

The latest theory on the subject is that of Mr. Joseph Turquan, who, on the strength of the skeleton of a child recently found in the fosse of the Temple, maintains that Louis XVII. was murdered on the day when the Simons left the Bastille, 29 January 1794, and was at once secretly buried; that a scrofulous child of his own age was substituted, in order that the murder might remain undis-

Unable to speak, I wiped my eyes, and her Majesty resumed, "They harass *you* also, M. Bertrand: but you pay no regard to them, for they do not know the Constitution so well as you do. Are you not afraid, however, that those permissions of absence to naval officers, which you are accused of having granted in such profusion, will turn out ill? The King," continued she, "is really uneasy on that head."

"I am, assuredly, infinitely honoured," replied I, "and grateful for the interest which the King and your Majesty take in that accusation, which, however, is too ill-founded to give me any uneasiness."

"But, after all," resumed the Queen, "how many have you granted?"

"I cannot exactly tell," answered I; "but I should think about a hundred. This, however, I do know for certain, that of all I have granted, there is not a single one which I would not grant again to-morrow; because, in spite of all the noise raised by my accusers, every one of those permissions has been granted conformably to the existing laws."

"I am happy," answered she, "to see you in this perfect security; but be upon your guard against their secret malice, for your innocence will be no security against that."

covered, and that the legal documents necessary to attest the death of Louis XVII. might be obtained when the substituted child died, his death being only a question of a few months. According to Mr. Turquan, the Duchess d'Angouleme and the other members of the Royal family were made acquainted with these facts after their return to France in 1814, which accounts for the coldness with which the child was spoken of by them and of his sister's refusal to accept his heart, which had been carried away by one of the doctors and was offered to her after the Restoration. Whether Mr. Turgain's theory is the final solution of a problem, which in my opinion is no problem at all, remains to be seen. His book is at least ingenious and interesting.



*Condorcet*



CHAPTER XVII.

Insulting letter from the President of the Assembly to the King, which his Majesty sends to the ministerial committee.—Letter written by me, upon this occasion, to the King.—Important measures are taken to form a royalist party in the Assembly, which fail, through the indiscretion of M. de Narbonne.—A division in the Council.— Its consequences.

THE Assembly, seeing how much the Ministers had lost credit by their conduct and by their want of unanimity, became every day more enterprising. Condorcet being named President about the beginning of February, was ordered by the Assembly to write a letter to the King: but as the form in which the President was to address letters to the King had not been regulated by the Constitution, after some discussion, it was decreed that the President of the National Assembly, in writing to the King, should lay aside the term *Sire* and directly begin with the subject of the letter; and afterwards finish and sign it without any of the accustomed expressions of respect.

Condorcet accordingly wrote the following letter according to the form prescribed, which, after being submitted to the Assembly, was sent by one of the messengers to the King. “The National Assembly, Sire, charges me to make known to you that it confines itself to demanding the complete carrying out of the Law of the 17 June 1791 (regulating the manner in which the King and the Assembly should communicate with each other). It attaches no importance to the number of deputies who compose the deputation. It cares only that there should be no interruption in the communications be-

tween itself and you and it wishes to put an end to all ambiguity on this point."

The President of the National Assembly, Condorcet.

I was with him in his apartment when the letter was delivered. He appeared to be greatly shocked on reading it.

"Is it possible to carry insolence farther?" said he, presenting the letter to me. "It is from Condorcet."

After having read it, I observed, that if the letter had been addressed to a clerk of the Assembly, it could not have been written in a less respectful style.

"I hope," added I, "that your Majesty will not allow this insolence to pass unnoticed."

"It is rather too much to be entirely overlooked," answered the King. "But what measure is to be taken?"

"In your Majesty's place, I would immediately send back the letter to the Assembly. But I will not take upon me to give you this advice until I have reflected further upon it."

"Is not there to be a ministerial committee this evening?" resumed the King. "Go you to *M. le Garde des Sceaux*, and I shall send him the letter."

I immediately went to the house of the *Garde des Sceaux*, and informed him and my colleagues, who were already there, of what had passed. Soon after the King sent Condorcet's letter; and they were all so much revolted upon reading it, that I expected they would advise the King to repel the insult in the strongest terms: but upon examining the different articles of the Constitution, they found that the case in question had not been foreseen, and they therefore concluded that it would be most prudent for the King to make no answer to the letter, which would sufficiently mark his displeasure.

On the contrary, my opinion was, that the silence of the Constitution, on this head, only proved that it had never been doubted but that the respect, which had ever been considered

as due to the King, was to be continued. But if they supposed that this silence authorised the slightest deviation from respect to his Majesty, they might also suppose that it authorised the greatest enormities; for nothing was said in the Constitution against insulting or even murdering the King. That besides, the form of correspondence betwixt the King and the Assembly being already fixed, namely, by presenting their decrees, or sending verbal messages by a deputation of the members, he had a right not to admit of any innovation which displeased him. That if they imagined there was any energy in the measure of not answering Condoreet's letter, they must acknowledge that it was an energy of a passive nature; and that in the King's situation, such a kind of energy would prove as hurtful as real weakness, as it tended to show that he was hurt, without having power to resent the injury.

These reflections determined me to write the following letter to the King, on the 8th of February 1792:

“Your Majesty has been advised to take no notice of the President of the Assembly's letter. I, on the contrary, think, that tolerating this insult will draw on many others, much more serious in their consequences. It appears to me of the highest importance for your Majesty to write immediately to the Assembly. I send the copy of a letter; and if your Majesty approves of it, the ministers may be instantly summoned, and the letter communicated to them, in your own hand-writing. Mine ought not to appear.”

*Copy of the Letter to the Assembly.*

“Gentlemen,

“When the nation acknowledged me for its King, I was entrusted with the national dignity, which I cannot, in any circumstance, allow to be attacked. I therefore return the letter which the President sent me yesterday by a messenger. The



Constitution has fixed the form of correspondence betwixt the National Assembly and the King. I ought not and I will not correspond with it in any other manner than by that form; namely, by messages. As for that respect which is due to me, I will rely on the sentiments which the French have always had for their Kings."

This measure appeared to his Majesty too strong, and the negative energy of silence was preferred; consequently no answer was given to the letter of the President.

To augment the King's popularity was at all times the object of the Ministers, but more particularly on those occasions when the Assembly treated him with insolence; and the letter of Condoreet was the greatest outrage which his Majesty had as yet received. He was advised to make a tour round the suburbs on horseback, to converse affably with the people, to visit the hospitals, and distribute alms. These acts of humanity, so much in unison with his character, gained him the applause of some people in the street, who cried *Vive le Roi!* but no other advantage ensued.

The formation of their Majesties' household, which the Ministers had hitherto neglected, was now regarded as a measure of the utmost importance, particularly as they flattered themselves that the King would be prevailed upon only to admit persons of acknowledged patriotism; therefore the committee of Ministers again took up this affair, and some of them proposed plans, and gave in lists of those whom they wished to have received into the household.

I informed the King, by the following letter, that Ministers were occupied on this subject:

"In the committee of yesterday, your Majesty's household was one subject of discussion. A list has been made of thirty persons who are to be proposed. The farther consideration is

deferred till Tuesday. The ancient almanac of Versailles, and that of the court of London, are to be consulted.

“As my desire is to present your Majesty with a plan for that purpose, and such a list as will be agreeable to you, I take the liberty of requesting that your Majesty will let me know your wishes on both these points, and I shall use every means, in the committee, to promote them. This I will endeavour to do in such a manner as to prevent all suspicion of my having received such a mark of confidence; having no view but that of giving to your Majesty a fresh proof of my respect and unlimited attachment.”

The King sent me no answer to this letter: but when I went to the levee, the same day, he approached the window where I was standing, and while he seemed to be looking at what was passing in the court of the palace, he said, in a low voice, “I received your letter. Let them take their own course.”

I was at this time occupied with the *Garde des Sceaux* and M. de Lessart, in a measure of far greater importance. We were endeavouring to form, secretly, a royalist party in the Assembly, and had already gained over eight or ten members of great influence on the Right; that is to say, among the moderate party; and it was only necessary to give them the means of influencing that party distinguished by the title of the *Independents*, or the undecided, who voted sometimes with the *Moderates* and sometimes with the *Enragés*, some of whom were supposed to have no other reason but to announce that they were to be bought, and would join the party which offered them the best terms. It was very well known, from the manner in which this assembly was composed, that there were few of the members who were not to be gained either by money, or the promise of places for their relations and friends.

As the power of nominating to places belonged to each minister for his own department only, it was necessary to acquaint them all with this plan, in order that they might all concur in its execution. For this purpose, we all assembled at the house of M. de Narbonne, who gave us a dinner, along with a certain person who was to be a principal agent in this business, as being intimately acquainted with many members of the Assembly. That this dinner might be the more secret, we met at the *petite maison* of M. de Narbonne. After dinner, this person presented to us the proposals of the principal deputies, with whom he had already begun to treat, and the following articles were agreed upon :

First, That none of the said deputies were to have any personal communication with the Ministers, but were only to negotiate with them through the above-mentioned agent.

Secondly, That they must never be required to propose or support any motion contrary to the Constitution.

Thirdly, That as often as the King and Council wished for their support for any particular measure, the said deputies must be informed twenty-hours beforehand by the agent, through whom they would instruct the Ministers with their objections, if they had any, and receive their answers.

Fourthly, That the means to be used for influencing the Assembly must be left entirely to them; that their demand as to this article admitted of no restriction.

The fund from which this expense was to be drawn, was, First, The sum of 1,500,000 livres, belonging to the Department of Foreign Affairs, for secret expenses, of which the Minister for that department was not obliged to give an account to anybody but to the King.

Secondly, From the free fund which certain Ministers had at their disposal.

And, thirdly, From the civil list.

The conference broke up at ten o'clock at night. The Ministers agreed, at parting, on the necessity of keeping this affair profoundly secret. Indeed the very nature of the case implied as much. Unfortunately, M. de Narbonne, just as he went from this meeting, met with Mathieu de Montmorenci, and a member of the Assembly, who waited for him, as he entered the Ministry of War and informed them of what had passed. At half past eleven that same night, the news had spread in the Assembly, which was still sitting. It was loudly complained of; the members concerned were enraged; and thus the affair completely failed.

The Ministers were in the utmost surprise and consternation next day, on hearing this account. They were eager to have an explanation with M. de Narbonne, but he took care to avoid it that day, by not coming to the Council till after it was begun, and hurrying out the instant it was over. However, he came to the committee of Ministers next day, and upon being reproached for having divulged what had passed at the conference, he at first said that he did not remember having mentioned it: but when Mathieu de Montmorenci and the other member of the Assembly were named to him, "Mathieu de Montmorenci," said he, "is my friend; and I am certain that he would not speak of it to any body. With regard to the member of the Assembly, he is of our party, and consequently equally interested with us in keeping the secret."

"It is of very little consequence," answered the *Garde des Sceaux*, "which of them divulged it: but what cannot be denied is, that we all solemnly promised to mention it to nobody."

"That is true," returned M. de Narbonne; "and I was wrong. But in short, gentlemen, I have long perceived that we cannot act together; and I will even own to you, that if I knew of five persons proper to be proposed to the King in

your places, I should immediately do it, and remain myself; because I think it would be of essential benefit to his Majesty's service that I continued in administration. But as I cannot make this change, I am determined to resign."

"Your resignation, or ours, is not the affair in question," said the *Garde des Sceaux*. "We are perhaps as little attached to our places as you can be: but we are sensible, that, in the present circumstances, the least change in the Council might be fatal to the King. We therefore wish to continue to act with you; and nothing will be easier, if you will fairly come to an understanding with us, and then adhere, without deviation, to what we have once agreed upon."

"No," replied M. de Narbonne, "that is impossible; because there are some members in the Council with whom I can never agree; for instance, M. de Bertrand."

"Me, sir!" cried I, greatly astonished. "And upon what account? What has happened to alter your opinion, since you made me so many protestations of esteem? Is it my fault that you have been guilty of an indiscretion, which has been attended with very bad consequences?"

"That is beside the question," said he. "But I see very well that we do not go upon the same plan. You refused me a frigate."

"I refuse you a frigate! When did you ask for one?" answered I.

"Don't you remember," replied he, "what you declared in the Council, when I mentioned the possibility of our having occasion for one, when we had under consideration the affair of M. de la Jaille, at Brest?"

"Was I to consider," said I, "an accidental observation, made by you at the time of that insurrection, as the official demand of a frigate? You appeared to have no other intention, in the question you then put to me, than to know if I

would arm a frigate, to cruise along our coast, in the case of our apprehending hostile intentions in any of the maritime powers; and I answered that I did not then know an officer to whom I would give such a command. If you had directly asked a frigate for yourself, I should have acquainted the King, and have done as he should have ordered.”

This conversation was followed by some observations from the *Garde des Sceaux*, upon the necessity of maintaining, at least, the appearance of unanimity in the Council: but the committee broke up, without M. de Narbonne having shown any disposition to reconciliation, or to act in a friendly manner with the other Ministers; and the public were soon informed of the divisions in the Council, which encouraged the malcontents to attack us; and no time was lost. The *Garde des Sceaux* was denounced in the Assembly. Another denunciation was announced against M. de Lessart; and the memorial of complaint against me, which appeared to have been forgotten, being again revived, was given to the King.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

Generals Rochambeau, la Fayette, and Lückner arrive at Paris.— Their conversation with the King.— They are introduced into the Council.— M. de Narbonne absents himself from the ministerial committees.— M. de la Fayette comes to the Committee.— Speaks of the ill consequences which must attend the misunderstanding among the Ministers.— He proposes that I should retire from the administration.— My letter to M. de Narbonne respecting an article in Brissot's Journal.— A letter from each of the three Generals to M. de Narbonne.

M. DE NARBONNE had summoned the three Generals Rochambeau,<sup>1</sup> Lückner,<sup>2</sup> and la Fayette to Paris, upon pretence of making them give an account of the state of the armies, and of the plan of operations. They were introduced by M. de Narbonne into the Council, on Friday the 2d of March,

<sup>1</sup> Jean Baptiste Donatien de Vimeu, Count de Rochambeau, was at this period 60 years of age. After serving with credit during the Seven Years War, he was sent with the rank of Lieutenant-General at the head of six thousand men to America, where he was instrumental in bringing about Cornwallis' capitulation at Yorktown, October 1781.

In 1791 he was appointed to the command of the Army of the North and on the 21st December was, with Lückner, promoted to the rank of Marshal of France. In 1792 he advised that the French Army should remain on the defensive, but his opinion was overruled by Dumouriez, who was in favour of immediate offensive operations. Rochambeau, offended at the rejection of his counsel, retired on the 15th June 1793, and was shortly afterwards arrested and imprisoned in the Conciergerie, whence he emerged after the fall of Robespierre. In 1803 he was granted a Marshal's pension by Napoleon. He died four years later, 10th May 1807, at the age of 83.

<sup>2</sup> Nicolas, Count Lückner, won distinction as a cavalry officer during the Seven Years' War, and after the peace of Paris, 1793 was offered a commission with the rank of Lieutenant-General in the



in spite of the repugnance which the King had to so unusual a measure. Before the Council opened, his Majesty asked them several questions upon the state of the armies. M. de Rochambeau, who was first interrogated, answered, "that his army was in a very bad condition with respect both to clothing and arms; and as for discipline, it was almost entirely overthrown, and out of his power, in the present circumstances, to re-establish it; of course, that with such troops, all military operations must be of a defensive nature only."

General Lückner, who had probably drank a little freely at dinner, saw things in a much pleasanter point of view than his colleague.

"I can tell your Majesty," said the General, addressing the King in his German French, "that something of the same nature may not be said of my army, which are also in want of certain little articles respecting arms and clothing; and the discipline, to be sure, is not very strict; but that is of little consequence, for, when I command, the troops always display ardour, they follow me always as I wish; but I am

French Army, then undergoing reorganization on Prussian lines. Lückner accepted the Revolution with fervour. He was promoted to the rank of Marshal of France on the 28th December 1791, and in 1792 succeeded Rochambeau as Commander-in-Chief of the Army of the North. After a somewhat precipitate retreat in June 1792, he succeeded in defeating the Austrians at Longwy on the 19th August. Notwithstanding this victory, his age and his ignorance of French made him slower, more cautious and less popular than the young French generals who were coming to the front. He was replaced by Kellermann and summoned before the Convention, who ordered him to remain in Paris. Shortly afterwards he retired, his pay was withdrawn, and in consequence of his remonstrance he was imprisoned. On the 3rd January 1794, he was condemned by the Revolutionary Tribunal as being the author or accomplice in a conspiracy between Capet, his Ministers, several generals and the enemy, to facilitate the entry of the troops of the coalition upon French territory. He was guillotined on the same day, at the age of 72.

for offensive war; the French troops excel in the attack; they are not fit for the defensive. Offensive war, please your Majesty, offensive war forever.”

M. de la Fayette being interrogated in his turn, answered in a few words; he contradicted neither of his colleagues; and, although their opinions were quite opposite, he contrived to accommodate what he said to both: after which, the King imagining that they would immediately retire, seemed pleased with the thought, that the impropriety of their sitting in the Council was thus avoided; but when he bowed, in expectation of their withdrawing, they requested his permission to read a memorial, which appearing to be too long to be heard standing, his Majesty seated himself, and desired the Generals to do the same.

The memorial was of little or no consequence; and, when it was finished, he told the Generals, that he would consider upon it, and they retired.

Next day M. de Narbonne did not appear in the committee of Ministers; but his friend M. de la Fayette came in his place, and spoke much of the bad effect which the dissensions in the Ministry had on the public mind, and of the fatal consequences they might produce to the King, &c., &c.

“You preach repentance,” answered one of the Ministers; “but is your friend M. de Narbonne of the same opinion?”

“Yes, undoubtedly he is.”

“Why then does not he join his colleagues, after the desire which they showed to be reconciled to him?”

“This was what I wished,” returned M. de la Fayette; “but after what he informed me concerning what passed between him and M. Bertrand, at the last committee, it seems almost impossible that one or other should not quit the Ministry; and M. Bertrand must pardon me, if truth forces me to say, that

however estimable his conduct may be, his retreat, in the present circumstances, would be as useful to the King, as that of M. de Narbonne would be fatal."

"Were I of that opinion," said I, "I should most certainly resign without hesitation; but I can with difficulty believe, that it would be advantageous to the King to be abandoned by one of his Ministers, merely because some base calumniators have made complaints against him that are absurd, and without the smallest foundation. With regard to the attack which M. de Narbonne directed against me, in order to extricate himself, surely that does not entitle him to require my retreat; and, although I have a better right to insist on his, so far am I from making any such request, that I now join my colleagues in inviting him to a reconciliation: this ought to satisfy him. You may assure him at the same time, sir," added I, "that notwithstanding his popularity, the term of my Ministry shall never depend upon his caprice. I have long since acquainted his Majesty with the particular time when I thought it would be necessary for me to quit his service — the period is at no great distance; but most assuredly I shall not hasten it a moment to please M. de Narbonne."

The other Ministers approved of what I had said, and supported me in it; and M. de la Fayette retired, much dissatisfied at the bad success of his embassy.

The next day, being the 4th of March, 1792, the following article appeared in Brissot's Journal:

"The reports which had been for some time circulating, of dissensions in the cabinet council, are well founded — a misunderstanding subsists betwixt the Minister of War and the Minister of Marine: the first, whose attachment to the Constitution is well known, employs every means of executing its laws, so as to render it successful; while the second en-

deavours to execute them in such a manner as to overturn it."

As soon as I saw this paragraph, I wrote the following letter to M. de Narbonne :

" *Sir,*

" I have just read a paragraph in the *Patriote Français*, which I make no doubt has shocked you as much as it has done me. Being convinced you had no share in it, I presume you are sensible of the propriety of immediately requiring that the paragraph may be retracted; which it will be easy for you to obtain."

*M. de Narbonne's Answer.*

" *Sir,*

" I felt as much uneasiness as you could on reading the paragraph you mention; in the inserting of which I certainly had no hand; but, as I am convinced, that the assertions it contains are true, I can neither contradict them, nor require that they should be retracted.

" I greatly esteem your talents and virtues; at the same time, I have had occasion to observe, that our ideas are not the same respecting the Constitution; and it appears to me, that our different method of executing its laws, in such critical circumstances, must be as hurtful to public affairs as to the King's interest."

Notwithstanding this extraordinary answer, I wished to try every means, of being reconciled with M. de Narbonne. His dismissal would have been the consequence of an open rupture; and, as he was then the most popular Minister, this would have been hurtful to the King. The same day, therefore, on which I received this letter, finding myself seated next him at the Council, I wrote the subsequent note, and showed it to M. de Narbonne.

" If M. de Narbonne has, as I wish, reflected more maturely

upon the letter I sent him this morning, it depends upon himself to re-establish perfect unanimity in the Council: he has only to complain of the article in the *Patriote Français*; to express before the Council his surprise and uneasiness on account of its insertion, and to declare that he will immediately write to the editor to desire it may be retracted. I have not communicated the subject of this note to any of my colleagues; and I give my word of honour that I never will, in the hopes that the step which I recommend, may be regarded by them as the spontaneous effects of M. de Narbonne's candour, which will certainly reconcile them all to him."

M. de Narbonne, after reading this note, wrote the following answer under it:

"I persist in the same opinion, which I sent M. Bertrand this morning. He is at liberty to lay open immediately, before the King, all the circumstances regarding Brissot's paragraph. I am ready to explain myself upon that article."

I wrote back upon the same paper:

"Don't you think it would be more expedient to discuss this affair in the committee, after the Council, before it is mentioned to the King?"

M. de Narbonne answered, by the single word, "willingly."

After the Council, we went to the apartment in the palace appropriated for the committee. I gave an account of my letter, and M. de Narbonne's answer, concerning the paragraph inserted in Brissot's Journal, with which all the Ministers had been very much offended. Then addressing myself to M. de Narbonne, I said,

"I now request, sir, that you will frankly explain, before our colleagues, what you mean by the difference of opinion which, you say, subsists betwixt us concerning the Constitution, and of our different mode of exercising it. I ought to, and I am convinced that I do, understand the Constitution

better than you do; because my Department not being so much overcharged as yours, I have had more leisure to study it; I never take a step without consulting it; and I am very sure that it is not in your power to give a single instance wherein I have deviated from what the Constitution prescribes."

"I contest nothing of all that," replied M. de Narbonne; "but you ought, with the same frankness on your part, to acknowledge that you do *not like* the Constitution; that you do not *approve of it*."

"No, sir," resumed I, "that is what I will not acknowledge; I will only declare that I do not allow myself to decide on the merits or demerits of the Constitution. I shall defer passing my judgment until that of the nation is manifested, after having experienced the effects which will result from its execution. Neither you nor I have sworn to love it; at all events, we have only taken an oath to execute it faithfully, and to enforce it by all the means in our power: let us content ourselves with being faithful to our oath."

"Yes," replied he; "but while I use every means of making the Constitution succeed, you endeavor to have it executed, in such a manner, as may prove to the nation that it never can go on."

"That is to say," returned I, "you *suppose* this to be my intention; for you certainly have not the smallest proof of it; and I never made such a declaration to you, nor to anybody else. Your supposition would be more plausible if I adhered with less strictness to the Constitution; but it is strange to conclude, from my scrupulous observance of it, that my design is to show the public that it cannot be executed: thus, sir, it is impossible for me to escape your censure, let me act as I will. May I ask by what right you assert that I have a design so contradictory to my conduct; and can you seriously found

your quarrel with me on such vague and inconsistent suppositions?"

"I don't mean to quarrel with you," he answered; "but you desired me to explain myself openly: then I must plainly tell you, that I form my opinion in consequence of what I see: your Department does not act."

"My Department does not act! what do you know, sir, upon the subject? what do you find deficient?"

"This, sir; that you have not commenced the new organization of the Navy: you have not an officer: not a captain of a frigate, while the land force is complete."

"It is true, sir, that the new organization of the Navy is not far advanced; but it certainly is not my fault, as the Assembly has not yet passed one of the decrees necessary to regulate this organization, although I have repeatedly demanded them; and as I have no right to issue such decrees, nor the power of executing them before they exist, I deserve no blame on that head: indeed, I have never been blamed on that account by the Assembly, notwithstanding the prevailing prejudice against me. If I had been as fortunate as you were," continued I, "in having all my decrees immediately passed, perhaps I should have been as far advanced; particularly if I had supplied the place of officers by pilots and sailors, as you supplied the officers who were missing by sergeants and common soldiers; perhaps I might have also had *my* Lückner to boast of; for the famous corsaire Paul Jones presented himself twice at my levee to demand the rank of Admiral."

"Well, well," said M. de Narbonne, "you see what a footing you are on with the Assembly: you can obtain nothing, while nothing I ask is refused me. It is true, that I frequently attend the Assembly, and go almost every day to the



committees. If you had pursued the same plan, you would undoubtedly have had the same success; but you never would have any communication with the committees: this singularity gave offence; and I am not surprised that it has raised you many enemies in the Assembly."

"I am not surprised at it neither," said I; "but notwithstanding the success which you owe to your communication with the committees, I persist in the opinion, that these communications are much more dangerous than useful. But, in short, sir, this is foreign to the question; for certainly it is not for my persisting in communicating with the Assembly only, and refusing to attend the committees, that you suppose me to have an intention of subverting that very Constitution which orders us to communicate directly with the Assembly, and says nothing of committees."

"In short, it is to no purpose," resumed he, "to prolong this dispute, as we may go on till to-morrow without coming to any agreement. What has passed, only proves that our principles are too opposite ever to be reconciled; and this consideration would have determined me to retire from administration, as I informed you at the house of the *Garde des Sceaux*, if I had not been restrained by the entreaties of the Generals."

"You will act as you please, sir," replied I.

All the Ministers were struck with the futility of M. de Narbonne's objections, and the force of my answers. They expostulated with M. de Narbonne, and endeavoured to bring about a reconciliation; but all in vain. He stood out with the obstinacy of a person who had a fixed plan, from which he was determined not to recede. This conduct of M. de Narbonne, at first appeared inconsistent with the intention he had announced, of giving in his resignation, but it became a little more intelligible three days after by the extraordinary

measure he adopted of publishing in the newspapers three letters he had received from the Generals Rochambeau, Lückner, and La Fayette, with his answers.

Those letters had been written at the request of M. de Narbonne himself; they were all three to the same effect, and very nearly in the same words. The substance was as follows:

“That the report of his retreat gave them the greatest uneasiness: that it was his duty to remain in administration, as his talents, activity, and resources were so useful to his country. That their confidence in him, and the certitude of obtaining, through his diligence, all necessary succour, had been their only motive for retaining the command of the armies; but that, if he persisted in his determination to retire, they must give up a situation, the duties of which they would no longer have the power properly to discharge.”

M. de Narbonne's answer to each was conceived thus:

“It is true, my dear general, that the difference of opinion which subsists betwixt M. Bertrand and me, respecting the Constitution, had determined me to give in my resignation; but the value you attach to my services, and your earnest desire for my continuance in administration, make me consider it as a duty to remain as long as the King honours me with his confidence.”

The publication of these letters, opened the eyes of the three Generals, who had probably written them unknown to each other; and each in the hope, that his personal approbation would have sufficient weight with the King, to fix M. de Narbonne in his office. They now began to suspect that he had summoned them to Paris, and loaded them with civilities, merely with a view to induce them to take this step; which was the more remarkable, as at that time attempts were made

to turn him into ridicule by numerous pamphlets and caricatures, in which he was distinguished by the nickname of *Ministre Linote*. (The Linnet Minister.)

M. de Narbonne had flattered himself, that the publication of this correspondence would confirm his credit in the Assembly, and put the King under the necessity of retaining him in the administration, lest his retiring should occasion that of all the three Generals; but the event did not answer his expectation; for those gentlemen were so much offended at the publication of their letters, that they complained of it to his Majesty; and retracted their declaration of intending to retire upon his resignation.

CHAPTER XIX.

The Ministers assemble to examine the conduct of M. de Narbonne. — They unanimously agree never more to sit in the Council with him.— My resignation.— Letter from M. de Lessart to the King. — My conversation with his Majesty.— Dismission of M. de Narbonne.— Violent discontents in the Assembly.— Decree against M. de Lessart.— Death of the Emperor.— The Chevalier de Grave appointed Minister of War.

THE conduct of M. de Narbonne raised the indignation of all the Ministers; and the day on which his correspondence with the three Generals was made public, they met in committee to deliberate on the part to be taken respecting him. It was unanimously decided, in the first place, that none of the Ministers should any longer do business with M. de Narbonne, and therefore it became necessary that the King should immediately decide betwixt him and us. But as the dismission of M. de Narbonne, in consequence of a quarrel, which seemed to have arisen from his zeal for the Constitution, might set the King and Council in an unfavourable light in the eyes of the public, we considered every possible means of obviating this inconvenience, and my resignation was considered as the most eligible. I opposed this decision, for two reasons. The first was, that I thought it disgraceful for me to retire, before his Majesty had given any answer to the Assembly respecting the memorial addressed to him against me, because my retreat might be construed into a tacit acknowledgment of the justice of the imputations it contained. In the second place, I earnestly wished to continue in administration till the 15th of March, because that day was fixed

upon for the review of the new body of naval officers, or rather for the disorganization of the former corps, and therefore I had fixed upon it as the termination of my administration; and I urged that the King could not in justice, nor the Council in honour, hasten it a day sooner, as it would be giving M. de Narbonne the satisfaction of including me in his fall, and expose me to a mortification I had not merited.

These considerations made no impression on M. Cahier de Gerville. He had first proposed my resignation, and he had obstinately insisted upon it; and declared with great violence, that he would give in his the very next day if I did not give in mine. This menace frightened the *Garde des Sceaux*, who had, till then, warmly espoused my cause; and I also became sensible, that at an instant so critical, the popularity of M. Cahier de Gerville would render his retreat more prejudicial to the King than mine. I therefore no longer insisted, but consented to give in my resignation, provided it was not made public till after the King sent an answer to the memorial which the Assembly had drawn up against me; which could be done early next morning, if the *Garde des Sceaux*, when he waited upon his Majesty with the request of the committee, would beg of him to let me have the memorial immediately, in order that I might draw up the sketch of an answer before the opening of the Assembly.

This condescendence obviated all difficulties, and gave such satisfaction to M. Cahier de Gerville, that he suggested to propose to the King that I should continue in office after giving in my resignation, until my successor was appointed. By this means all my views were answered. I was certain that the King would make no objection. I accordingly wrote my resignation, while my colleagues were employed in drawing up the answer which the King was to make me; and they endeavoured to render it as honourable for me as possible. It

was agreed upon that the *Garde des Sceaux* should next morning present my resignation, and the form of the answer, as drawn up by the Ministers for his Majesty. It was agreed also that M. de Lessart should that evening, after the committee, write to him an account of what had passed. The following is a copy of this interesting letter, which renders it superfluous for me to give a circumstantial detail of what passed at the committee, especially as the testimony of a third person will have more weight than my own.

*Letter from M. de Lessart.*

“I went this evening, betwixt ten and eleven o’clock, to the house of the Minister of Justice, which I informed your Majesty was my intention, and there I not only found M. Bertrand and M. Tarbé, but also M. Cahier; and soon after M. de La Fayette arrived, whom the *Garde des Sceaux* had already seen in the course of the day.

“M. de La Fayette told us that he had been very desirous of bringing about a reconciliation amongst the Ministers; that this had at all times appeared difficult to him, upon account of the difference subsisting betwixt M. de Narbonne and M. Bertrand; but that now things had come to that point, that he could no longer interfere: he gave as his reason the publication of the three letters from the Generals, and, above all, the answer which M. de Narbonne had given to him. He declared that he had never consented to the publication, nor had he any idea of such a thing till he saw the letters in the newspapers. After this explanation, which was cold and laconic, he retired. The moment he went out, M. Cahier vented his indignation at the conduct of M. de Narbonne, in the strongest expressions; and he ended by saying that he must never more set his foot in the Council. But at the same time he added, that the dismissal of M. de Narbonne

might produce very bad consequences, unless the voluntary resignation of M. Bertrand followed soon after.

“M. Bertrand said that he could not, at that moment, give in his resignation, but that he would do it most willingly after the 15th of March; that such had always been his fixed intention.

“The *Garde des Sceaux* supported M. Bertrand, and said that it would be beneath the King's dignity, and the credit of the Ministry, to yield upon such an occasion.

“M. de Cahier insisted, with force, upon M. Bertrand's immediate resignation. He founded his opinion upon the present disposition of the people, the public interest, and that of the King.

“He was seconded by M. Tarbé in such a manner, that M. Bertrand condescended so far as to promise to give in his dismissal as soon as the King should have answered the memorial of the National Assembly.

“M. Cahier insisted on his former opinion with great vehemence, declaring, that if M. Bertrand did not give in his resignation immediately after the King had demanded that of M. de Narbonne, he himself would resign the very next morning.

“I had, till then, taken little part in the debate, being, at bottom, entirely of the opinion of M. Cahier de Gerville, which I had hitherto concealed, out of delicacy to M. Bertrand, whose situation was extremely cruel: but seeing things so far advanced, I at last remarked to M. Bertrand, that as he was resolved upon the sacrifice, he ought to make it in the manner most advantageous for the King, in the present state of public affairs; and that it appeared highly expedient that he should give in his resignation next day, in order to diminish the effect which M. de Narbonne's dismissal might produce.



“M. le *Garde des Sceaux*, who had been greatly struck with the decisive declaration of M. Cahier, being sensible of the importance of preventing his resignation on the same day with M. de Narbonne, ranged himself on the same side.

“M. Bertrand consented; and we drew up the letter which is proposed for your Majesty to send in answer to his letter of resignation.

“This long and important discussion passed without acrimony, and in a manner becoming persons who have sentiments of mutual esteem. Your Majesty’s interest and the public good were all we had in view.

“In the proposed answer from your Majesty to M. Bertrand, you will require of him to remain in his Department till a successor is appointed.

“With respect to M. de Narbonne, we think he ought immediately to be replaced; and that it is even of consequence that his successor take his place in Council this very evening. Upon mature consideration, it appeared to us that the Chevalier de Grave is the most proper person to replace him; and on the presumption that he would be agreeable to your Majesty, the *Garde des Sceaux* sounded him yesterday; and during the committee, he went again to his house at one o’clock in the morning, with the same intention; but not finding him at home, left a note, desiring to see him as early as possible.

“We also think it very necessary that your Majesty should immediately send for the three Generals, in order to prevent them from giving in their resignation, which they will most certainly be excited to do by every possible means. Your Majesty will not fail in persuasive arguments. On their part, it would certainly be a failure in their duty, and even a breach of their oath, to resign at such a conjuncture. But as this is a point of the utmost importance, your Majesty will

perhaps think it expedient that the Queen should be present at this interview, that every circumstance may concur to ensure success.

“There are also precautions to be taken relative to the National Guards, as it is very possible that seditious people may take advantage of the present circumstances to excite disorder.

“It is said that M. de Boissieu is not at Paris. By whom is he replaced? Might he not be sent for?

“Your Majesty will be informed of these particulars, in the morning, by the *Garde des Sceaux*. It appeared to us proper to give him the preference upon this occasion, as being the senior Minister, and in some respects the chief of the Council.

“Your Majesty may then send for M. Cahier de Gerville, to inform him that you have adopted his opinion; and at the same time to request him to continue in administration beyond the time he has fixed, which is the 15th of this month. It is to be wished that his resignation could be deferred at least eight days beyond that period. It would be well if the Queen would join her invitation to M. Cahier to that of your Majesty, by which means success would be more certain.

“Your Majesty and the Queen ought to show every mark of favour and regard to M. Bertrand, so unjustly sacrificed; and who, in yielding to the force of circumstances, gives the strongest proof of attachment and duty. He is a man of merit, who must not be looked upon as entirely lost to your Majesty's service.

“I shall end by observing, that the conduct of M. de Narbonne is so seriously reprehensible, that his dismissal seems absolutely necessary, unless your Majesty prefers giving him your *entire* confidence. But in case you should adopt the first of these measures, no time is to be lost. All explanation will be superfluous, and derogate from your dignity. It

is even of consequence to prevent M. de Narbonne from coming to the Council this evening, as he will not fail to bring a very patriotic discourse, which he will propose that your Majesty should address to the National Assembly; and, if he receives his dismissal next day, he will say that it is upon account of this discourse that he has fallen into disgrace.

“I take the liberty to remind your Majesty of the three Generals. It appears to me that you should see them: that you should receive them all three together; and, if possible, before any of them have been tampered with. In talking of their letters, your Majesty, without informing them of your intentions, may ask them, if, after swearing to be faithful to the nation and the King, they can seriously determine to serve no longer than M. de Narbonne remains in administration. Your Majesty may add, that even supposing that some alteration should be made in the Ministry, you will certainly choose none but men distinguished for patriotism and abilities.”

Signed de Lessart.

“Friday morning 5, o'clock.”

On leaving the Committee (about three in the morning), I immediately sent a copy of my resignation to the editor of the *Journal de Paris*, earnestly requesting him to insert it in that day's paper, in order that the retreat of the Minister, who displeased the Assembly, might be made public at the same time with the dismissal of him who had more partisans in it, a circumstance, however, that did not prevent him from being sometimes insulted, which never happened to me.

To give an idea of the manner in which M. de Narbonne was sometimes treated in that hall, I shall only relate the words which the deputy Albitte addressed to him at the evening meeting a little before his dismissal:

“That great Minister,” cried the deputy, “whom you be-

hold there, who has such vast talents, and whose numerous applauders besiege the Assembly and the Committees, often makes reports entirely devoid of truth. As for his activity, so much vaunted, it is of as little utility as the activity of one who walks in his sleep."

M. de Narbonne heard this rhetorical flourish with a smile of contempt, which was the only reply he ever made to those indecent attacks, for which a less enduring Minister would have obliged the Assembly to have done him justice.

I had not seen the memorial which the Assembly had addressed to the King against me; but as it could contain little else besides a repetition of the former reports made by the Marine Committee, I prepared a form of the answer the King was to make, all but a refutation of the new accusations which the memorial might contain. I therefore addressed a letter to his Majesty, begging that he would send me the memorial, and informing him that my resignation was to be presented to him.

My letter was as follows:

"I entreat your Majesty will send me the memorial of accusation against me, as it ought to be answered as soon as possible. The Ministers, assembled last night in Committee, deliberated till three in the morning upon the letters which M. de Narbonne caused to be printed in every journal. His conduct being highly disapproved of by all, they intend to propose that your Majesty should dismiss him; but, as the dangerous woman who governs him (Madame de Staël) might take advantage of the present crisis, to excite an insurrection, on pretence that a patriotic Minister is dismissed for having denounced an aristocratic one, my unbounded attachment to your Majesty, and regard for your interest, have determined me to give in my resignation as soon as M. de Narbonne has received his dismissal. But I shall ever remain inviolably

devoted to your Majesty's service; and my chief ambition will ever be, to have it in my power to prove my respectful attachment."

The King received this letter an hour before the *Garde des Sceaux* went to him from the Committee.

At ten o'clock I received two letters from his Majesty; one was that which the Committee had drawn up, in which the King, while he accepted of my resignation, exacted that I should continue the functions of my office until my successor should be appointed. The other letter was entirely from himself, full of expressions of kindness, and in the true style of Henry IV. I would wish to transcribe it entirely; but I valued it too highly to run the risk of losing it in my flight; it remains at Paris, with several other letters from the King and Queen: the box which contains them is buried six feet under ground in a garden. I hope that this precious deposit will be one day restored to me, or at least that it will not be lost to my children. In the meantime, I must content myself with only transcribing part of his Majesty's letter, which is deeply engraven in my heart.

"I am sorry that circumstances oblige you to give in your resignation: from what I have learned, I believed you acted wisely; but I do not feel the less regret. I had determined to exert myself in supporting you; but that devil of a man (M. Narbonne) has brought things to such a pass that it seems impossible. I hope your services will not be always lost to me and to the State; I may, one day, perhaps, be in a situation to derive advantage from them."

The person who brought this packet, desired me to go to the King as soon as possible.

I waited upon his Majesty before I had recovered from the emotion occasioned by his letter; and he received me with an

air of sadness, which so thoroughly overcame me, that I burst into tears. He turned away to the window, where he remained some time silent, to give me time to compose myself; then approaching me with a look of kindness:

“You always wished,” said he, “to give in your resignation on the 15th of this month. You shall continue in your Department, at least, till then; and we must see next what can be done. Have you seen the *Garde des Sceaux*?”

“No, Sire,” answered I.

“I thought he had gone to tell you of Narbonne’s dismissal. He said, when he parted from me, that he was going to your house.”

“He probably went directly,” answered I, “with your Majesty’s orders to M. de Narbonne.”

“Not at all,” answered the King. “I sent them by a footman. There, read the letter I wrote to him; it is not long.”

The letter contained these few words:

“I hereby inform you, sir, that I have appointed M. de Grave to the War Department; you will therefore give him access to the papers belonging to your office.”

“I have not sent you the memorial of the Assembly,” resumed the King, “because I wished to answer it immediately. It contains nothing new, and was even very ill written; so that the answer was not difficult.”

“I am sorry,” said I, “that your Majesty has taken so much trouble. I have been employed in drawing up an answer, which I have brought to show your Majesty.”

“That is much too long,” said the King, when he saw four pages of writing, “and therefore useless. Mine is ten times shorter. See if it won’t do much better.”

“Perfectly well, Sir,” said I, after having read it. “I would not change a word.”

“I am glad,” answered he, “that you approve. Go,

then, to the *Garde des Sceaux*, to have it copied in his office; and after I have signed it, he will countersign it, and send it to the Assembly."

This answer was, in substance, as follows:

"That the King did not find an article of accusation, in the memorial addressed to him against me, that had not been included in the former accusations, which the Assembly had rejected by passing to the order of the day; and that therefore having no reason to adopt a different opinion of me from what the Assembly entertained, he did not think proper to withdraw his confidence from me."

I had this letter expedited for the Assembly with all possible diligence, and it was sent at the moment when the unexpected news was received of M. de Narbonne's dismissal. Most unfortunately, my resignation was not then known, having been sent too late to be inserted in the newspapers of that day; and no more was requisite to inflame the Brissotines, the Girondists, and the whole *Côté Gauche* of the Assembly. At that very sitting, Brissot,<sup>1</sup> availing himself of the present dis-

<sup>1</sup> Jean Pierre Brissot de Warville (properly Uarville, the village in which he was born) advocate, journalist and politician, was the thirteenth child of a well-to-do innkeeper at Chartres. His earlier life was passed partly in England, partly in the offices of the Duc d'Orléans and, for four months at least in the Bastille. He wrote on Law Reform and founded in 1788 the "Society of the Friends of the Negroes" to which in great measure, the insurrection and massacre of the planters in Hayti 1791, was due. But it was as a journalist that Brissot was chiefly known before and during the earlier days of the Revolution. He was in the habit of giving himself the air of possessing a vast amount of esoteric information about the Courts and policies of foreign powers which gained for him a reputation which was as useful to his career as it was without foundation in fact. He wrote with a facile pen, a genius for invective and denunciation and a supreme indifference to truth which raised him to the first rank of the libellers and wholesale liars who played so great a part in the history of the Revolution. Elected



position of the Assembly, made a furious declamation against M. de Lessart, which produced a decree of accusation against that Minister. (See Introduction.)

Without giving him time to make his defence, or examining into the truth of any accusation so suddenly brought forth against him, this unfortunate and honest man was, in consequence of this decree, conducted to the National Court es-  
to the Legislative Assembly he became one of the leaders of the Left, where for the time being he nominated men far more gifted and more honest than himself, such as Condorcet, Vergniaud and Gensonné. So long as the Legislative Assembly lasted, Brissot's party was hardly distinguishable from that afterwards known as the Jacobins, except for the fact that Brissot and his friends were far more eager for war with Austria and Prussia than were Robespierre and his followers in or out of the Assembly. So far as Brissot and the Girondists can be said to have a definite policy, it was to render the King's position so impossible as to force him to abdicate and to leave the ground free for the establishment of their ideal middle class Republic. The war was intended rather as a step towards this than as desirable or necessary in itself. In the Introduction to these Memoirs I have quoted a conversation between Brissot and Étienne Dumont of Geneva, which explains both the object and the methods which he and his followers adopted in their war with the King and Constitution. Dumont describes Brissot as "one of those men in whom party spirit prevailed over right and justice; or rather he confined right and justice to his own party. He had more of the zeal of the work than any man I ever knew. Had he been a Capuchin, he would have doted upon his staff and his vermin;—a Dominican, he would have burned heretics; but being a French republican he hesitated not to calumniate, to persecute and to perish himself upon the scaffold."

Brissot was re-elected to the Convention, where he was brought face to face with the Jacobins, who had been represented in the Legislative Assembly only by Chabot and a few inferior individuals. To be brought into direct contact with such men as Danton, Robespierre and Marat produced on Brissot and his colleagues a sobering effect. At the same time it cowed them, and on the first serious test, the King's Trial, they failed, and this cowardice was their own sentence of death. After the final defeat of his party, 31st May 1793, Brissot endeavoured to escape to Switzerland but was captured at Moulins, brought back to the Abbaye prison, tried, or rather sent before the Revolutionary Tribunal, and guillotined with twenty of his colleagues on the 31st October 1793.

established by the Constitution at Orleans. After remaining six months in the prison of that Court, without being brought to trial, he was transferred to Versailles, the September following, by a detachment from Paris, and there massacred with other prisoners.

In addition to the King's sorrow on account of the afflictive events of this day, particularly the unjust accusation of M. de Lessart, a courier arrived the same evening from Vienna, who brought intelligence of the death of the Emperor Leopold.

The Chevalier de Grave,<sup>2</sup> now appointed Minister of War, took his place in the Council that day. His manners, although popular, were not of the ostentatious caressing nature of those that distinguished M. de Narbonne, but his conduct and writings since the Revolution, and his attending the popular assemblies in the different towns where he happened to be with his regiment, made him pass for a zealous constitutionalist amongst the Jacobins, and for an enraged Jacobin amongst the Aristocrats; therefore his nomination

<sup>2</sup>The Marquis Pierre Marie de Grave (often spelt Graves) held the rank of a Maréchal de Camp when he was summoned to succeed de Narbonne, as Minister of War, 9th March 1792. Dumont, who knew him well, says, "He was an honest man and his heart was good; he was not deficient in acquirements and he laboured hard. After two months of hard labour he became bewildered to such a degree that he forgot his own name and not being aware of what he was doing, signed himself Mayor of Paris. No one was less qualified to take a part in a stormy administration."

Madame Roland in her Memoirs treats him with undeserved contempt, even sneering at the fact that he was a well-bred gentleman, an accusation which could certainly not be brought against her husband or her circle of friends.

De Grave resigned after two months' experience of office, on the 8th May 1792. He emigrated and did not return to France until 1804. In 1809 he was placed in command of the Ile d'Oleron with the rank of General of Brigadc. After the restoration he was created a Peer of France, 17th August 1815. He died, at the age of 68, in January 1823.

did not hurt the King's popularity. In fact, the chevalier was neither a zealous constitutionalist nor a Jacobin; but he was, what many well-meaning people in France were at that time, misled by the attraction of new systems, by personal discontent, or by views of ambition. People of this description had formed a little system of reformation suitable to their own fancies and situations; and as long as they had hopes that their own plans would be adopted, all was well. In the progress of the Revolution, however, they became alarmed, and heartily regretted that they had ever assisted it in the smallest degree; but being unwilling to retract, partly from shame, and partly from fear, they yielded to the torrent.

Whatever were the motives which actuated M. de Grave, before he came into the Council, he certainly showed great attachment to the King, during his short administration; which would have been still shorter, had not his Majesty for some time refused to accept of his resignation.

If the royalists had placed more confidence in him, he would certainly have served them as far as was consistent with the timidity of his character.

The King was reduced to the fatal necessity of forming a new Ministry at a time when he had not the power of appointing a single individual in whom he could place confidence. Sensible of the dangers which surrounded him, he now showed evident anxiety about his situation. Instead of the contempt and indifference with which he had supported the outrages which he had hitherto been exposed to, sorrow and consternation were strongly marked on his countenance during that sad council of the 9th of March 1792, which was the last at which I was present, and from which I retired, my heart impressed with the deepest melancholy.

CHAPTER XX.

An offensive letter which I received from M. de Cahier de Gerville.— My explanation with him, and its consequences.— M. Lacoste called to the ministry.— His character.— M. Duport Dutertre, Cahier de Gerville, and Tarbé, their characters and dismissal.— Dumouriez called by M. de Lessart.— Supplants him.— Character of M. de Lessart.

WE were all sincerely vexed at the decree of accusation issued against M. de Lessart; but M. Cahier de Gerville, always carried away by his violent and suspicious temper, took it into his head that I was the voluntary cause of this misfortune, and that I had prevented my dismissal from appearing in the *Journal* of the 9th of March. I did not give myself the trouble to combat his notion, as I hoped he would become sensible of its injustice, upon cool reflection: but I found, by the receipt of the following note, a few days after, that he still continued in the same disposition of mind:

“ *Sir,*

“ After what has passed, you ought no longer to attend the Council; and I give you notice, that if you appear there this evening, I shall immediately leave it.” Signed Cahier de Gerville.

I knew him to be very capable of this act of intemperance, and even of giving in his resignation, on this pretext, with a patriotic ostentation, which might have injured the King’s affairs. This consideration hindered me from taking any notice of the rudeness of M. de Gerville’s note, which, being dictated by a man blinded by passion, did not merit the attention of a reasonable person.

I carried my moderation to the length of even going to his house, in order to find out if he had not a more reasonable motive for his intemperate behaviour than I had supposed. My appearance rather surprised him.

“You seem not to have expected this visit, sir,” said I, smiling.

“I acknowledge I did not,” answered he: “but I had no doubt of your being offended; and since you are come, I am willing to give you what satisfaction you please.”

“You imagine, perhaps,” said I, “that I am come with an intention to challenge you?”

“If it be so,” replied he, “I am at your commands.”

“Explain to me, in the first place, sir,” said I, “what your motive was for writing to me in such in an imperious style.”

“Because I have been informed,” replied he, “that the answer given by the King to your letter of resignation, has had a very bad effect, particularly his order for your continuing your functions; and such is the temper of the people on that subject, that if you were again to appear at the Council, I should not be surprised to see it the cause of an insurrection.”

“Your reason is very good,” said I; “but you might have given it in two words, without putting yourself in a passion.”

“You know my impetuosity,” rejoined he, “and also that I was extremely out of humour at your conduct with regard to poor de Lessart. What, in the devil’s name, could you mean by your unwillingness to have your resignation made public at the same time with Narbonne’s? I foresaw what would be the consequence; and you appeared, at one time, to have come over to our opinion. What could make you change your mind?”

“And who told you,” answered I, “that I had changed my

mind? On the contrary, I sent a copy of my resignation to the writer of the Paris Journal, and desired him to insert it in his paper. What could I do more?"

"You certainly were too late in sending it," replied he.

"We went," resumed I, "from the Committee at three o'clock, and the journalist received my packet before four. Here is his answer, informing me that I was too late, as his Journal was already printed."

"You ought," said he "to have stopped the publication, and have caused another edition to be printed, with your resignation."

"Yes," replied I, "but I did not receive his answer till nine o'clock in the morning."

"Ah! in that case I am in the wrong: but I advise you not to go this evening to the Council."

"I am of your opinion," I answered; "and I am going to give the King notice, that he may not be surprised at my absence."

I accordingly went to the King immediately, and gave him an account of what had passed. His Majesty approved of my conduct, and observed, with some truth, that it was lucky my temper was less violent than M. Cahier de Gerville's.

Lacoste,<sup>1</sup> formerly first clerk of the marine in the depart-

<sup>1</sup>Jean de Lacoste, the successor of Bertrand de Moleville as Minister of Marine, was appointed, on the recommendation of Dumouriez, on the 15th March 1792, and held office until the 10th July of that year, when he resigned on the plea that the powers of the executive were totally insufficient to carry on the Government. Arrested in 1793 he had the good fortune to be tried by the Criminal Court of the Department of the Seine and was consequently acquitted. Had he fallen into the hands of the Revolutionary Tribunal, the fact that he had been a Minister of the Crown would have been all the evidence required to secure his condemnation and execution. As it was, he survived to hold office for many years under the Consulate and Empire as Member of the "Council of Naval Prizes of War." He died at the age of 90, in 1820.



ment of the colonies, and afterwards sent, in quality of the King's commissary, to establish the new constitution in the Isles du Vent, succeeded me in the marine department. His dispute with M. de Behague, relative to their respective powers, was the cause of his being recalled into France. His denunciations against that governor, in the Assembly and in the club of Jacobins, where he went upon his first arrival, and his low birth, gave to his nomination all the popularity which the circumstances required. This man, so violent in his temper, and coarse in his manners, ought never to have been raised from the sphere in which he had before passed his life, as it was most certainly the one in which he seemed best fitted to act. Like others of his rank, the circumstance which he most admired in the Revolution was, that it cleared the way to the first offices of the State to all, without any other distinction than those of talents and of virtue; two qualities in which few men are sensible of a deficiency. His attachment to the Jacobins, or rather his desire to preserve their good graces, led him into the indecent absurdity of placing a pike in his hall, with a red cap upon it: but, with all that was faulty or ridiculous in his manners, Lacoste was, at bottom, an honest man: he detested the cruelties of the Revolution; he always behaved respectfully to the King, and gave his Majesty some proofs of attachment which required courage.

The three Ministers who remained in place from the 9th of March, were M. Tarbé,<sup>2</sup> minister of finance; Cahier de Ger-

<sup>2</sup> Louis Hardouin Tarbé, after many years service in the Treasury, was appointed Minister of Finance, 18th May 1791, an office which he held until the close of March 1792.

On the 15th August of the same year he was included in a "Decree of Accusation" of High Treason passed by the Legislative Assembly against the ex-Ministers of the King, Montmorin, Duport Dutertre, Bertrand de Moleville and others.

He made good his escape from France, but after the Terror re-



ville, minister of the interim; and M. Duport Dutertre, *Garde des Sceaux*, who, after the decree of accusation against M. de Lessart, was entrusted with the business of the foreign department till another minister should be appointed.

M. Duport Dutertre, whom the Revolution had raised from the situation of clerk, with a salary of twelve hundred livres, to the first dignity in the Kingdom, was, from the beginning, and with good reason, the zealous partisan of a Revolution which had been so advantageous to him. M. de la Fayette, by whose influence he had been appointed Minister, and all that part of the first Assembly which went by the name of the Left, placed great confidence in him. Even after the dissolution of that Assembly, he continued in intimacy with some of the principal persons who had composed it; namely, the Lameths, Barnave, and Adrian Duport, who were every day at his house: he did nothing without consulting them.

The constitutionalists who formed the Left of the first Assembly, became the Right of the second, in which the Left was composed of the most violent Jacobins, who aimed at the overthrow of monarchy, constitutional or otherwise; and therefore attacked, with equal fury, the constitutional Ministers, and those whom they suspected of being attached to the ancient government. On this account M. Dutertre had nearly as many enemies in the Assembly as myself. He was obliged to give in his resignation a week after my retreat, in spite of all his efforts to support the Constitution, to which he was more attached by gratitude than by esteem. Messrs. Tarbé and Cahier de Gerville were obliged to do the same, because they had adopted the fatal idea, that a Ministry entirely composed of Jacobins, was the only one which was proper for

turned to his native place, Sens. Under the Consulate he refused offers which were made to him of employment by Bonaparte and lived in retirement until his death on the 7th July 1806.

that period; and they persuaded the King and Queen of this.

My nomination to the Marine Department had given great uneasiness to M. Duport Dutertre, who has since owned to me, that he looked upon me with an evil eye for some time, as he was convinced that I had only accepted of the Marine Department as a step to the Chancery. But he became one of my most zealous partisans when he found that it was not from ambition that I entered administration; and, that so far from desiring the place of any of my colleagues, I only thought of disengaging myself from my own as soon as I could with honour.

Tarbé, formerly a clerk of the finances, was an intelligent, active, laborious, honest man, and entirely devoted to the King: he might have kept his place in administration, with the consent of all parties, as he had never taken a step, or uttered an expression which could possibly give offence to any one. He had no great talents for speaking, and drew up papers but indifferently; but he was mild, modest, and polite. He seemed much more impressed with the recollection of what he had been, than elated by the situation he had risen to, and was no way anxious to impress others with the idea of his own importance. Entirely occupied with the duties of his office, which he was thought to be more capable of discharging than any other, it would have been fortunate had he continued in office; because, in so doing, he would have rendered the King the essential service of keeping out Clavière, who afterwards proved one of the most wicked and dangerous men of the Revolution.

Cahier de Gerville was in his heart a republican; he detested and despised Kings; and equally abhorred priests of all denominations, whom he accused of having, in all ages, been the apostles of falsehood, the propagators of fanaticism, and the promoters of civil wars and persecution.

“I wish from my soul,” said he one day to us, coming out of the Council, “that I could hold betwixt my finger and thumb that cursed race of vermin, and annihilate them with one crack.”

Notwithstanding this strange speech, he showed no propensity to cruelty in his actions: but he might really be considered as a very hot-headed man. In his opinion, the Constitution had one very great fault; namely, that it retained something of Monarchy; but, as he had sworn to observe it, he was scrupulously faithful to his oath.

He was a member of the Municipality of Paris; and the exercise of municipal sovereignty overheated his naturally ardent brain: *the people* was his incessant theme; and he declaimed, with peculiar violence and volubility, against aristocracy, nobility, emigration, and priests. He saw everywhere, but particularly at Court, treasons, plots, conspiracies: in a word, he possessed all the characteristics of a stern republican; and, in this quality, enjoyed great popularity.

Soon after he entered the Ministry, he did justice to the King's good qualities; and became so sensible of that prince's probity, the rectitude of his intentions, his moderation, and humanity, that he almost forgave him for being a King. The only fault he found in him, was his attachment to the Catholic faith, and to non-constitutional priests. But Cahier de Gerville's opinion of the Queen was far from being so advantageous; he looked upon her as a haughty, perfidious, and wicked woman, who thought of nothing but of re-establishing despotism; and his idea of her Majesty was such, that when the Ministerial Committee was held in the palace, he never would speak with freedom, from a notion that the Queen, or some of her spies, listened at the door, or behind the wainscot: the smallest noise was sufficient to confirm him in his sus-

pitions, and prevent his uttering another syllable during the whole time of the Committee.

He was one day extremely offended by an answer which the King inattentively made him in the old regal style, which was now exploded. M. Cahier de Gerville had spontaneously undertaken a very laborious piece of business, merely in the view of being useful to his Majesty. After the Council, he came and gave an account of it: on which the King said, "*I permit you, sir, to present your memorial to me.*"

The Minister was so much shocked with this answer, that he took up his pocketbook, and abruptly left the King, without saying a single word. He came immediately to pour forth his bad humour in the Committee; and, after telling his colleagues what had just passed, he continued to repeat with indignation: "*I permit you to render me an essential service; a pleasant manner indeed of thanking a man! . If I had had the memorial in my hands, I would have thrown it into the fire. However, he shall never set eyes on it.*"

The Minister's insolence had not escaped the King; but he was forced to bear with this, as with the other marks of disrespect which he daily received. Two days after, his Majesty desired Cahier de Gerville to bring him the memorial: he did this in such an obliging accent and manner, as entirely to overcome the Minister's anger. He immediately brought the memorial; and the King was again reinstated in his good graces.

Upon another occasion, he treated Madame Elizabeth with great rudeness. This virtuous princess, whose life was dedicated to piety and benevolence, had continual applications from the unfortunate. An unhappy nun had been particularly recommended to her protection; she desired to see Cahier de Gerville before he went to the Council, intending to speak to him in favour of the nun. He waited upon the

princess; but, before she had finished what she had to say, interrupting her abruptly, he said, "It is astonishing, Madame, that you set so little value upon the time of a Minister, as to make him lose half an hour in hearing the history of a nun: I have other business on my hands than the affairs of nuns; and you will forgive me, Madame, when I tell you frankly, that I shall give myself as little trouble about this one as about others."

The mild Princess, whose ears had never been wounded by so harsh an expostulation, was so much shocked and confounded, that she suffered the Minister to leave the apartment without attempting to reply.

Cahier de Gerville, finding that the popularity of the Ministry daily decreased, saw no other means of retaining the little he still possessed personally, but that of giving in his resignation. His retreat was followed by that of the *Garde des Sceaux*, Duport Dutertre, who, having been chiefly supported by Cahier de Gerville's friendship and popularity, did not choose to remain alone exposed to the attacks of his enemies, whose number every day augmented. He therefore announced, that he would give in his resignation as soon as the accusation against him was examined into.

This determination, which his friends took care to spread, accelerated the bringing of this business before the Assembly; the accusation was rejected, which, as his enemies observed, was rearing a golden bridge for his escape.

A month after he was elected, by a great majority of votes, Public Prosecutor of the criminal tribunal, in place of Robespierre, who resigned the office without having ever fulfilled its functions. The conduct of this monster has but too well shown, that humanity was not his motive; the power of accusing was no satisfaction, unless he had also the power of destroying his victims.

Messrs. Duport Dutertre, Tarbé, and Cahier de Gerville, all gave in their resignations between the 15th and 20th of March.

The new Ministry was composed of M. Duranthon for the Department of Justice, M. de Grave for that of War, de La Coste for the Marine, Clavière for that of Finance, and Dumouriez for Foreign Affairs. The latter, a month before his nomination, was at Niort, where he had been forced to take refuge from his creditors. M. de Lessart being informed that he was the intimate friend of Gensonné, imagined that Dumouriez's good offices might be of service to him with this deputy, who was a member of the Diplomatic Committee, and one of M. de Lessart's most inveterate persecutors. In this hope, he wrote a ministerial letter to Dumouriez, who had long solicited employment in the diplomatic line, and desired him to come immediately to Paris, where he would be informed of the King's intentions; and, at the same time, sent six thousand livres to enable him to clear off the debts which he might have contracted in Poitou.

Dumouriez hastened to Paris, not doubting but the situation of Minister Plenipotentiary, at least, was intended for him. Upon his arrival, he flew to M. de Lessart. The Minister told him, that nothing was yet decided; but that a change would soon take place in the diplomatic body; and, as he intended to propose him to the King, for one of the places which was to be vacated, he wished to have some conversation with him first, that he might be able to judge in what situation his services would be most useful. M. de Lessart then spoke to him of the opposition he experienced in the Assembly from some of the principal deputies. At the name of Gensonné<sup>3</sup> Dumouriez interrupted the Minister.

<sup>3</sup> Armand Gensonné, Advocate of Bordeaux, and one of the Deputies of the Department of the Gironde to the Legislative Assembly



“As for him,” said he, “he is my intimate friend, and entirely at my disposal; I not only take in hand to put an end to his attacks against you, but even to bring him to receive your commands to-morrow morning, if you please.”

M. de Lessart readily agreed to this proposal. Accordingly Gensonné accompanied Dumouriez next day; expressed much regret at having misunderstood the Minister's intentions, which had led him to oppose his measures; and, at length, promised entirely to change his conduct.

and the Convention, shares with Vergniaud, Gaudet and Brissot such honour as is to be derived from the leadership of the Girondists.

In the Legislative Assembly he distinguished himself by violent denunciation of the Ministers, the Constitutionalists and the Clergy. He joined with Brissot in spreading abroad the fable of the Austrian Committee and in promoting the war with the Empire. Nevertheless he was probably a more self-seeking republican than Brissot or Vergniaud. In any case there is good reason to believe that he entered into negotiations with the King between the 20th June and the 10th August and drew up a Memorandum stating his views of the measures by which Louis XVI. might still be saved.

His speeches in the Convention on the King's trial are curious and interesting.

As in the case of Vergniaud and the other Girondists, justice and terror may be traced struggling with each other through each successive utterance. Ultimately terror won; he voted for Death, salving his conscience by an eloquent and able appeal in favour of submitting the judgment to the Sovereign People, and by adding to his final vote a demand that the Convention “should occupy itself without delay to the measures to be taken with regard to the King's family, and that the Minister of Justice should be ordered to take immediate steps for the punishment of the Assassins of September.

Gensonné's relations with Dumouriez rendered his position after the General's “Treason” peculiarly perilous.

On the 2nd June he was one of the twenty-eight Girondist Deputies who, with the Ministers Clavière and Lebrun-Touche, were ordered to be imprisoned in their own houses “under the safeguard of the Nation.” The safeguard was a poor security. On the 24th October, with eighteen of his colleagues, he was delivered into the hands of the Revolutionary Tribunal and was guillotined with the rest on the 31st October 1793.



M. de Lessart was very well satisfied with this interview; conceived great hopes of benefit from it, and exulted in the lucky idea which had struck him of calling Dumouriez to Paris. The General was not long in perceiving this, and did not fail to avail himself of it, with his usual address. On his third visit to the Minister, he expressed a fear of being arrested by his creditors if he remained longer in Paris. There was no means of retaining him, but by paying his debts, which were pretty considerable; and the necessary sum was taken from the fund of secret expenses, which was at the Minister's disposal.

Some days after, Gensonné and the other friends whom Dumouriez had in the Assembly, gave him to understand that it would be an easier matter for him to succeed M. de Lessart than to support him; and, in this instance, as in many others, ambition triumphed over gratitude.

M. de Lessart's talents, without being striking, were greatly above mediocrity; he had a penetrating and just understanding, and an upright mind, notwithstanding his ambition, which sometimes misled him. Perhaps he would have had energy of character, had he enjoyed a better state of health; for he was capable of adopting vigorous measures; but, unless they were put in execution immediately, a nervous attack, to which he was extremely subject, was sufficient to get the better of them.

He had long been the friend, the favourite, and admirer of M. Necker: he acknowledged, however, and bitterly lamented the faults of that Minister's last administration; but those very faults appeared in the eyes of friendship the errors of virtue.

"M. Necker," said he, "does not know mankind; and his great mistake is in judging of the hearts of others by his own."

M. de Lessart was neither a republican nor a constitutionalist, but was sincerely attached to the King, whose virtues he revered, and, to the last moment, he gave his Majesty every mark of zeal and fidelity that was in his power. He may be reproached, like all who composed the Ministry at that time, with having continued to discharge the functions of his department after the King's departure for Varennes, and during his captivity. But it is presumable, that his Majesty was satisfied with the motives which had induced the Ministers to that conduct, though contrary to the orders he had left at his departure; because he restored them all to his confidence afterwards, and was very much affected on account of the decree of accusation issued against M. de Lessart.



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